

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE
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Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, November 7, 1898, by Frank Tousey.

No. 293.

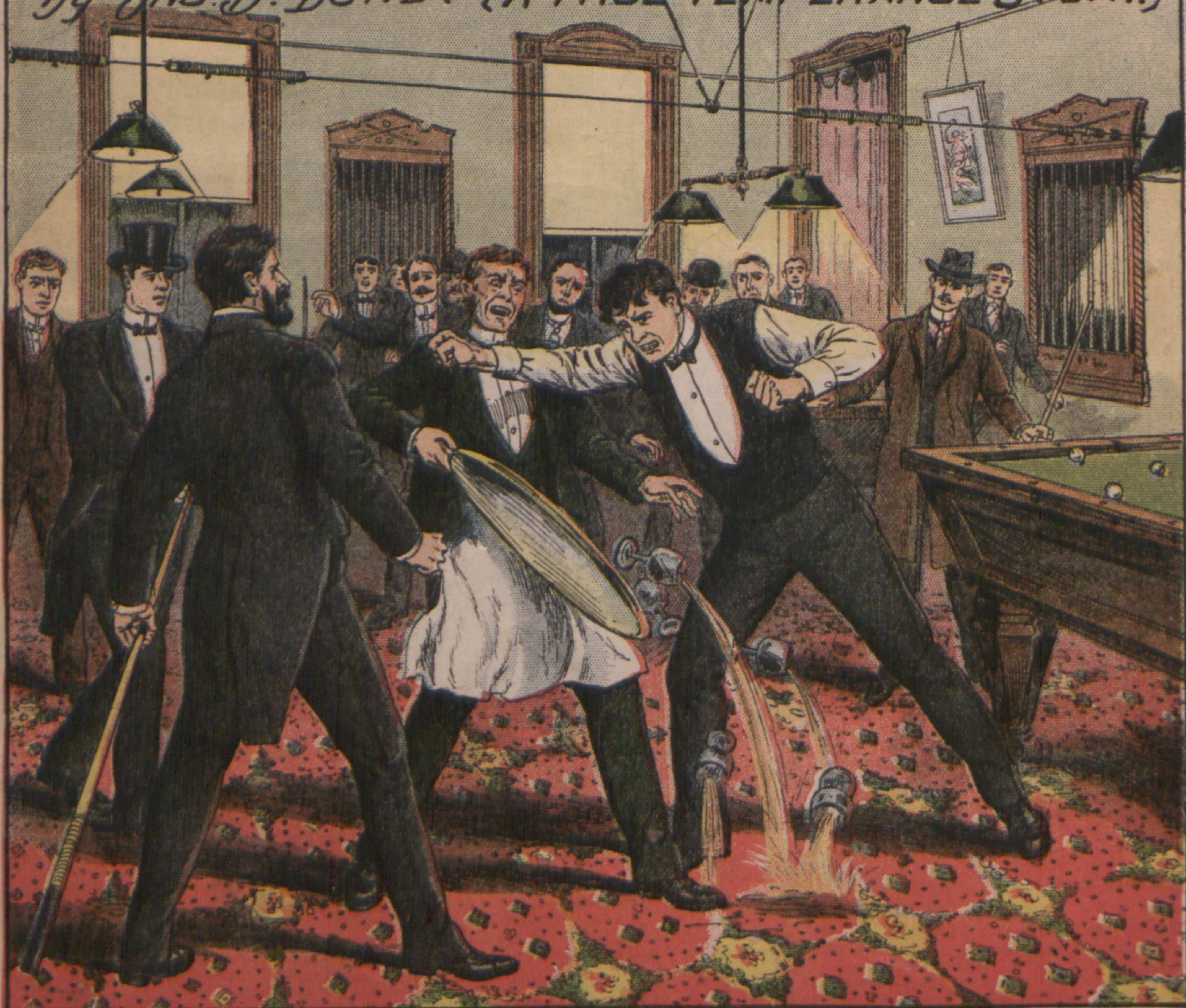
NEW YORK, JANUARY 13, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

THE SHATTERED GLASS!

OR, A COUNTRY BOY IN NEW-YORK.

By JNO. B. DOWD. (A TRUE TEMPERANCE STORY.)



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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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The Shattered Glass

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A TRUE TEMPERANCE STORY.

By Jno. B. Dowd.

H. H. Shackleford,
1882,

CHAPTER I.

FATHER AND SON—A SECRET—THE YOUNG LOVERS.

"It's a dangerous move, my son."

"I think you are too fearful, father."

"Your thinking that way makes me all the more uneasy, my son. If you, too, were fearful, you would not be in so much danger, for you would be more on your guard, and thus escape where otherwise you would be caught. But you are too confident—too full of your own ideas about something you know nothing of. What do you know of the temptations that beset a man in a great city like New York?"

"But, father, you have always taught me to do right. If I can do right in the country—here in Rosedale—why cannot I do so in New York?" and young Robert Ross turned his honest face up toward his father's as he waited for his reply.

"Because, my son, the surroundings are so different," said the father. "I have known old ministers who had grown gray in the service of religion to go to New York and, in a single hour, lose the reputation they had spent a lifetime in building up. If old men fall that way, what may be expected of such inexperienced young men as you?"

"Well, I don't think they could have been much to be so easily tempted."

"Ah! they had never been exposed to temptation before, till they went to the city, just as it will be in your case. You will leave your old home to-morrow for the first time in your life, and God knows how we shall miss you, Robert. I tremble for you, for I know your danger. You don't," and the voice of the father trembled as he spoke, while his eyes filled with tears.

"Father, why are you so much afraid of New York?" Robert asked. "Uncle Silas has made a fortune there, and you know he said in his letter that I could do the same if I am made of the right stuff. I ought to have the 'right stuff' in me, for I am your son and his nephew. Surely I will try hard enough to

do as he has done. Have you ever lived in New York, father?"

The question somewhat startled the father, for he looked hard at his son for a whole minute without uttering a word. Robert gazed up at him, as if surprised at his hesitation in answering the question.

"Robert," his father finally said, "I will tell you a secret that has been locked in my bosom for thirty years. I have never told it to anyone before—not even to my mother or yours—and I would not now breathe it did I not know that duty to you demands that I do so. You must give me your word of honor that you will not repeat it to anyone else."

Surprised as well as astonished, Robert said:

"Of course I will do that, father."

"Very well. Listen, and ponder well my words. When I was just your age, your Uncle Silas, who is two years older than myself, and I went to New York to make our fortunes. We succeeded in getting situations in a large wholesale house, which employed hundreds of clerks, and commenced work in high glee.

"We expected to go at once to the head of the list of great merchants, for we were young then, and didn't know as much as we learned afterwards. Silas worked hard. So did I. Neither of us was lazy, for our parents had reared us to work for the bread we ate. But I was fond of amusement, and Silas was not. I went around the city of evenings in company with other youths, taking in all the sights that are to be seen under gaslight in that great city. Every evening, while Silas was studying and trying to master the intricate details of commerce, I was out roaming over the city with gay companions of my own age. Silas often warned me of the danger, to say nothing of the neglect of opportunities, but I could see no harm in enjoying the sights of the city, and so kept on in the course my companions were going.

"At home I had never dared to drink wine or play cards, but my gay friends laughed at my old-time prejudices, and at last induced me to drink, and then initiated me into the

mysteries of card-playing. I soon learned to smoke cigars, and carried them either in my mouth or pocket all the time.

"Silas continued to warn and protest, but in vain. I was enjoying myself, and doing no harm, and so kept on. But one day there came a blow that changed the whole course of my life. The head of the house sent for me to come to his private office. I went, of course, wondering what in the world he could want of me. When I entered I saw my brother Silas in there with him.

"'Silas,' said the merchant, turning to my brother, 'I have been watching you for the last year. You have the stuff of a first-class business man in you. Your salary is doubled from this day hence. If you continue as now it will be doubled again one year hence, and in five years you can expect to become a member of the firm. As for you, Joseph, you had better go back to the farm. The less you have to do with New York the better it will be for you. Young men who drink and lead the life that you do are not wanted by business men. Go to the cashier. Your account is made up, and you will receive what is due you for services rendered.'

"My son, words fail in attempting to describe my feelings. I was amazed—crushed—and for several minutes stood speechless before my brother and the great merchant, till the latter arose, dismissed me with a wave of his hand, and turned to his desk. Silas and I went out together.

"'I am sorry for you, brother,' Silas said, taking my hand in his, as if he would console me in some way, 'but you brought it all on yourself. You would not listen to me, and now you are to go home in disgrace. It will nearly kill father and mother.'

"'Silas,' I said, grasping his hand, 'promise me you will not tell any living soul of this, and I will go back to Rosedale, and go to work on the farm. I will make a model farmer, and live and die one.'

"'I will do that,' he said, and thus we parted. I returned home and told my parents that I preferred to live on the farm with them. My good mother pressed a kiss on my brow, and thanked God that her boy had chosen to remain by her side all her life. She little dreamed of the true cause of my return, and died in the full belief that my love for her had brought me back. I have never been in the city since. Silas is far richer than I, but I doubt if he is happier. When I look on my broad acres and see how God has rewarded my industry I rejoice that I came back to the country. He has great nerve, and if you can do as he did you will succeed as he did, and become as rich. If you do as I did he will send you home in disgrace as I was thirty years ago. You know my story. Keep it locked in your bosom, but forget not the lesson. Shun wine, cards, and gay companions. Whatever you have to do, do it well, and show your uncle that you have the stuff in you for a successful business man."

Robert Ross was silent for a minute or so after his father had finished speaking. But he was doing some hard thinking all the time.

"Father," he finally asked, "why didn't you turn over a new leaf in the city instead of coming back to the country?"

"Because I did not care to battle against temptations that had floored me," was the reply. "I owned my defeat, retired from the field, and became a successful farmer. Now you know what my experience has been with New York. Will you try to profit by it, my son?"

"Yes, father. I am glad you have told me. I will not forget it, and will keep on my guard against the dangers you speak of. I did not know that you had ever been to the city, but I will do just as Uncle Silas tells me."

"That's right. Seek his advice about everything. He has experience and age, and if you follow his advice I will have no fears about you," and Mr. Ross wrung the hand of his manly-looking boy with a great deal of satisfaction.

The reader will readily understand the situation from this conversation between father and son. Robert Ross, a youth of twenty years, had finished his education at the Rosedale Academy, and had received an offer from his Uncle Silas, the great merchant of New York, to take a place in his house as salesman.

He was to start for New York the next day after the opening of our story. Everybody in Rosedale knew of his intended departure, and expected to shake hands with him and bid him godspeed on his way. Robert, therefore, had an arduous task before him, for he had many friends in the village who would have felt slighted had he gone away without bidding them good-by.

When Robert left his father he hastened down one of the pretty shaded streets of the village, as if he had a special call to make.

It was just sunset when he started, and in a few minutes he passed before the gate of the cottage of the Widow White.

A white pebbled walk led from the gate, between a perfect forest of rose-bushes and other flowers, to the cottage.

The moment he appeared at the gate a young girl, fair as the flowers about her, sprang from a clump of rose-bushes and ran shyly to meet him.

It was Jessie, the pretty daughter of the widow, the belle of Rosedale.

"Oh, Robert," she exclaimed in a soft, melodious tone of voice, "I knew you would come, and so was looking for you."

"Did you, Jessie? You never looked sweeter than now." If old Miss Simpkins was not watching us across the way I would have a kiss from those sweet lips," and he looked as though he would give the fortune he expected to make to fold her to his heart just one moment.

"Then I wish she had something else to watch," said Jessie, "for I feel that it will be a long time before we meet again, Robert."

"Oh, I promise you I will come back soon, and——"

"You must make no promise you cannot keep," she said, interrupting him. "You cannot come back before the holidays, but you can write, Robert. Promise me that you will write to me at least once a week."

"Of course I will. How could I neglect to write to my queen? I would write every day if I could get the time."

"I know you would, Robert, but you won't have so much leisure time in New York. I have heard that a good business man in New York has but little leisure time. I will be satisfied if you will write regularly every week, so I can know on what day to expect your letters."

"I will not fail to write as often as I can, darling, for it will be a work of love."

"I am only afraid of one thing, Robert," and her voice fell almost to a whisper, while her eyes were cast down.

"What is that, Jessie, darling? What are you afraid of?" he asked, taking her hand in his, as they slowly wended their way along the pebbly walk toward the house.

"That you will forget me, Robert," was the whispered reply.

"Forget you—my precious love!"

"Yes, Robert. Those stylish city girls are so much prettier than the country girls that——"

"Jessie, darling, how could I forget you when I wear you in my heart? You are my first and only love. I live but for you."

Her face glowed, and her eyes shone with a happy light as she listened to his words.

"You won't let them steal your heart away from me, then?" she said, happy as happy could be over his words.

"No, indeed. There is no one in all the wide world so dear to me as my own sweet Jessie. Will you be as true to me, darling?"

"Oh, Robert, can you doubt my love?" and she turned her great brown eyes up to his.

"No, I have never doubted you," he said, "but I sometimes think it is all a dream, and that I will wake up some time and find that I really have no Jessie to love."

Jessie's silvery laugh was heard by her mother in the cottage, for she laughed heartily.

"Oh, I can assure you," she said, "that I am a real live girl—not a shadow, but a real substance that loves you more than words can tell."

"Say that again, darling," he said, pressing her hand. "I love to hear you say such sweet things."

She laughed again, and then moved across to another path that led through the roses.

The stars were beginning to peep out by this time, and the deepening shadows of twilight grew darker under the shade of the trees.

Just as they disappeared from the main walk a dark shadowy form crept from a cluster of rose-bushes and passed down toward the gate.

That shadowy form was a man who had been listening to most of the conversation of the lovers, who, unconscious of his presence, had talked with their hearts as well as their lips, saying many things sacred to lovers the world over.

CHAPTER II.

THE RIVAL SUITOR—THE OATH—ROBERT REACHES NEW YORK.

When he reached the gate the eavesdropper, or spy, passed noiselessly out upon the street and closed it softly behind him.

"So she has a lover?" he muttered to himself, as he wended his way up the street. "I had heard as much, but never dreamed she was actually engaged to anyone. S'death! She shall not marry him! I swear it by the stars above me this night! I love her as woman was never loved before, and I would rather die as her murderer than know that she is the wife of another. Ah, Robert Ross! I live in New York myself, and you are coming there to live. I know a thousand ways to draw you into nets from which there is no escape. Your ruin will be my gain. She will not wed a man whose reputation is blasted, as yours will be ere you have been there a year. Curse you! You are in my way. I will remove you from my path, or my name is not Gerald Graves."

Gerald Graves was the nephew of old Tobias Graves, of Rosedale. His father was a retired New York banker, who indulged him to an extent that ruined him morally. He was finely educated; had traveled around the world, and acquired the polished manners of a gentleman. Spending a few weeks of each summer in Rosedale, he had seen and fallen in love with pretty Jessie White, the belle of the village. He had but little trouble in getting an introduction, and then he paid court to her with an earnestness that alarmed her. She soon showed him that she did not like his company, which convinced him that some other man had already enchained her affections. He sent her costly presents, but she returned them with thanks, saying she could not accept them.

Gerald Graves was a man who had always been able to have his way about things. His natural temperament gave him considerable force, for his was a strong will. He never before met one who had refused to listen to his suit, as his wealth made him a good catch for the young ladies of Rosedale. Jessie White was poor. Her mother owned the pretty cottage where they lived, and had a life income from a certain source which enabled them to live in modest comfort and ease.

"Oh, yes," he hissed, "I'll settle him, and then make her own me as her lord and master, or die. She is worth all the

women in the world. I never saw one I could well and truly love till I saw her. I'll play a double game, and let her see that he is unworthy of her. She would never marry a man she could not respect, and if she can respect Robert Ross a year hence, it will be more than any other woman could do."

He made his way back to his uncle's residence, and chewed the cud of meditative vengeance till midnight.

In the meantime Robert and Jessie had entered the cottage together. Mrs. White, a good, motherly woman, welcomed him only as such a woman could.

He took tea with them, for Jessie insisted that he should do so.

"It will be many weary weeks," she said, "ere you will take tea with us again."

"Why, I will be with you in heart and spirit every day, Jessie," he replied, laughing in a very lover-like way.

When the time came for him to leave, Robert bade the mother and daughter good-by, kissing both with a hearty, affectionate sincerity that completely won the widow's heart.

Returning home, he found quite a number of friends gathered there for the purpose of taking leave of him, and they had a regular frolic together till a late hour.

At last they all retired, and the Ross family were left to themselves. They soon went to bed, and slept till sunrise the next morning.

Then the last meal was eaten and preparations made to go to the depot.

"My son," said Mrs. Ross, as Robert put his arms around her neck and kissed her, "remember what your father and mother have taught you—to do right in all things. Shun evil companions, and take the advice of your Uncle Silas whenever you need it. Good-by, and may God bless and protect you."

She kissed him, and then, woman-like, sat down and cried. No wonder, for there is no love like a mother's love. She never ceases to love, though all the world might spurn her son or daughter.

The father and two sisters then took leave of him, after which he set out for the depot, which he reached just in time to meet the fast express train for New York.

"You have no time to lose, my son," said Mr. Ross. "Get aboard as soon as you can. Good-by, and God bless you."

Robert shook hands with his father, and hastened to board the cars.

He had not been two minutes in his seat ere he felt a familiar slap on his shoulder.

Looking up, he beheld the tall form of Gerald Graves standing beside him.

"Hello, Graves!" he exclaimed. "Are you going to the city, too?"

"Yes," was the quiet reply. "I received a telegram last night which compels me to return. Glad I met you. We can have some fun together in New York."

Rob and Gerald had been acquainted for some months, but were never on very familiar terms. But Graves' present cordiality made an impression on Rob so pleasant that he invited him to share his seat.

Of course they drifted into an animated conversation on Rob's new departure.

"The city is the place for a young man of spirit and ambition," said Graves. "There is more to be seen there in one day than in the country in ten years. Fortunes are often made there in an hour."

"And often lost in the same short space of time, eh?" Rob suggested.

"Well, yes. No man can gain except as some man loses."

"I don't think I could enjoy a fortune that some other man had lost," said Rob. "I'd rather make it by honest industry."

Graves burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

"Why, my dear boy," he said, "if you talk that way in New York they'll set a commission of surgeons to examine you to test your sanity. The bulls and bears of Wall Street war against each other all the time. When one goes up the other goes down, and the winner scoops the pile. To say you would not enjoy a fortune made by a rise in stocks is to tell people that your brain is soft somewhere. Oh, no. To live in New York one must have money. Everybody in New York works for money—that is, those who want more than they have got. A business man toils all through the day, and in the evening snatches an hour or two of amusement, then goes to bed, and——"

"But all business men don't do that way, do they?" Robert asked.

"Every man has his own peculiar way of getting rest and recreation," was the reply. "Some seek it at the opera or theater, while others go to the billiard-table, some to their bottle of wine and paper in the quietude of their own homes—every man to his own way, but they all do it. They must have rest and recreation, or they could not stand the immense strain on the mind as well as muscle."

The most of this was news to Robert, and so he asked:

"Do they allow their clerks to do that way, too?"

"That depends upon the character of the clerk," was the adroit reply. "If the clerk has a strong head, with sense enough to guide him correctly, they do. But if the clerk is a silly fool who can't drink a glass of wine without getting drunk they very quickly discharge him, a thing they ought to do. A man who can't drink outright ought not to be allowed any privileges whatever."

"I think so, too," assented Robert. "I think that the clerk who drinks any liquor at all ought to be discharged."

"Oh, that won't do. The best business men in New York drink wine every day at their tables."

"But they don't get drunk nor allow their employes to do so."

"How can a man help being drunk after drinking wine or brandy?"

"Very easily. You might ask how a man can avoid being a glutton after eating dinner. The quantity has everything to do with it. Just take enough and then stop. That's the way a sensible man would do."

All this was food for thought to Robert Ross. He had not been taught that before. He had been brought up in the old Biblical idea that a man must not drink any wine or liquor at all, and this action on the part of the wise men of Gotham was a revelation to him.

"I am glad you told me of this," he finally said, "as I am quite ignorant of the customs and habits of business men in the city."

"Oh, that's all right. You'll drop the thing after awhile. Just let me give you a few points that will be of service to you in the beginning of your career in the city, and that you will some day thank me for."

"All right. I'll thank you right now on the receipt of the points," Robert remarked, "as I am most anxious to get them."

"In the first place," continued Graves, "keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut. Ask no questions that will betray you as a green countryman. Watch other people and see how they do, and shape your course accordingly. If you go to giving yourself away as a greenhorn every sharper in town will get after you, and your brother clerks will guy you to death. They would make life a burden to you."

"I'm much obliged to you for the points," Robert said. "I'll try to profit by them."

"That's all right. Just go around with me for a couple of

weeks, and I'll show you all that's worth seeing in New York, and it shall not cost you a cent, either."

"I don't know that I ought to go about that way."

"Why not?"

"Because it is not right to——"

"Not right to walk about a city and see all the points of interest? My dear sir, you will make a sad mistake if you let any of your acquaintances hear you talk that way. It won't do, you know. They would laugh at you until you would be driven to desperation. Who in thunder told you it was wrong to ride or walk about the town and see the sights?"

"My father told me to attend to business; stay at home and keep out of bad company."

"All of which is good advice as he meant it. He did not mean to say that you were not to get acquainted with the city, but to stay at home rather than to run about in the company of dissolute companions, and he was right."

"Yes; I think that was what he meant. Of course I must get acquainted with the city, or I will always be a greenhorn."

"Yes; you must see all that is worth seeing in the city. Just let me show you around, and you will know the whole city in a fortnight. There are not many places in New York that I don't know something about."

The villain thus succeeded in worming his way into the confidence of our hero ere they reached the city. Robert had promised to go with him to visit places of interest as soon as he got settled down to business.

"I want to go direct to Uncle Silas' house," Robert said, when the train drew up at the Grand Central depot.

"I'll get a carriage and send you right up to the house," Gerald replied. "The driver will have no difficulty in finding the number."

Gerald procured the carriage and had the young man from Rosedale sent up to the palatial residence of his uncle.

Of course Silas Ross and his family were glad to see him. They knew him well, for they had often visited Rosedale in the summertime, though he had never been in the city before.

"Why, Cousin Rob!" cried pretty Celia Ross, running forward and hugging him in a very cousinly manner, "I am so glad to see you. Margaret, here is Cousin Rob!"

Margaret, the elder sister, ran into the parlor and greeted him in the same way her vivacious sister had done.

Then came the uncle and aunt.

"Ah, my boy," said Mr. Ross, grasping his hand and shaking it heartily, "I am glad to see you. We were just speaking of you. Have you been to lunch yet?"

Now Robert had never heard the word lunch used in Rosedale in all his life. But he knew what it meant, all the same, and so he answered:

"No, sir."

A servant was at once sent to prepare lunch for him, during which time Mr. Ross plied him with questions about the family in Rosedale. Robert answered in a manner to please him.

While he was eating lunch the pretty Celia sat in front of him, talking as fast as her tongue could wag.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come, Cousin Rob," she said. "You are just in time for the great charity ball, which comes off next week. We'll have ever so much fun there, and I'll introduce you to ever so many nice girls."

"But I won't have time to go, will I?" he innocently asked. "Won't Uncle Silas keep me busy all the time?"

"Why no, you goose!" and her merry laughter rang through the house. "What put that idea into your silly head?"

Robert blushed, and thought that Graves had said a wise thing when he advised him to ask but few questions where he could use his eyes and ears.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEMPTER AND HIS VICTIM—THE SHATTERED GLASS.

The first evening at the residence of his uncle Robert thought was the most pleasant he had ever spent in all his life.

His two beautiful cousins, Margaret and Celia, were as entertaining as well-bred city girls know how to be, and he thought the hours sped faster than he had ever known before. It was midnight before he thought it nine o'clock, and he was shown up to his room.

The next morning he reported at the store, and his uncle sent for him to come into his private office.

"Robert," said the merchant, as soon as our hero entered the little office, "you have come to learn how to be a merchant, have you?"

"Yes, Uncle Silas, and I am going to learn how to be one, too," and the emphasis of the reply pleased the merchant very much, for it manifested pluck and determination—two great requisites in a successful business man.

"That's right. Go in, now, and show us the stuff you are made of. If you turn out all right you can be admitted to a partnership in five years."

He then told him what his salary would be for the first year, assigned him to his duties, with another clerk to initiate him into the method of doing things.

Robert was highly pleased with everything, and being of a naturally vivacious temperament and quick wit, he soon made friends with all the clerks in the house.

They paid him a good deal of deference because he was a nephew of the head of the house, and destined to become a junior member of the firm.

After he had been there a week Gerald Graves sent him a note inviting him to meet him at the Grand Central Hotel in the evening, and go with him to some place of amusement.

Pretty Celia Ross had already introduced him to a number of her young lady friends, who thought her cousin a very handsome young man and excellent escort in the absence of a more eligible catch. She had prescribed a dress suit for him, and he forthwith purchased one.

The evening of the day he received Gerald Graves' note he said to Celia:

"I am going to the theater to-night with Gerald Graves, if Uncle Silas does not think it wrong."

"Think it wrong!" she exclaimed, elevating her pretty eyebrows. "Of course not. I only wish I could go with you, but I cannot. Two of my friends are coming to spend the evening with me. Do you know that sister Margaret is half in love with Gerald Graves, but he doesn't seem to care anything for her. His father is immensely wealthy. He'll have at least a million when his father dies."

"He seems to be a very clever man," ventured Robert.

"Oh, yes. Can't you invite him to call some evening? I know Margaret would be pleased almost to death if he would."

Robert laughed, and said he would see if he couldn't get him to call some evening, and then left the house.

"Surely she would know if Uncle Silas would object," he muttered as he walked down the avenue toward the rendezvous. "Graves was right when he said that a right use of time hurt no man. A couple of hours of recreation this evening will do me lots of good. Cousin Celia says that Uncle Silas often goes to the opera and theater. It's not wrong then, and so I will go with Graves, though I don't know where he is going."

Thus excusing himself, he wended his way toward the Grand Central Hotel, where he found Graves waiting for him.

"Hello, Ross," cried Graves. "I thought you had made up your mind not to come. What made you so late?"

"I wasn't in a hurry, I guess," was the reply. "I am not too late, am I?"

"Oh, no. There's no real fun in New York till ten o'clock, and from that till four in the morning."

"Well, you won't see me up till four o'clock," said Robert. "I am too fond of sleep for that."

"I'm with you there, my boy. A clear head in the morning is a desirable thing; hence I make it a general rule to go to bed at a regular hour."

They went out to a theater—the first one Robert was ever in—and the time soon passed. Robert was pleased—charmed would be a better term for it—and he thought life in the city far preferable to one in the country.

"Now tell me," Graves said, "if you can see any harm in what you have seen and heard to-night?"

"No," said Robert. "I can see no harm whatever in it."

"Neither can anyone else, except those in the little country towns who have never seen anything of the kind. Come on with me now, and I'll show you one of the small elephants of New York."

"Isn't it too late to go anywhere else to-night?" Robert asked, consulting his watch.

"Thunder, no! Haven't you a night-key?"

"Yes."

"Then come," and taking him by the arm Graves almost carried him along by force, and in a few minutes he entered one of the largest billiard-saloons in the city.

Robert was astounded at the great number of tables and the brilliant lights. At least a hundred people were smoking, drinking, and playing billiards.

Robert had often seen the game in Rosedale, and had played—or tried to—a few times. There was but one billiard table in Rosedale, which was kept in a quiet kind of a place. This place in the city, however, exceeded in extent and magnificence anything he had ever dreamed of.

"How's this, eh?" Graves asked, on seeing an expression of Robert's face.

"It beats anything I ever saw," he said. "There must be at least fifty tables here."

"Yes, fully that many, and you would be astonished at the number of wealthy business men playing here nearly every evening. I tell you it's the greatest recreation in the world to an overworked business man. I've seen your uncle in here many a time."

"Thunder!" gasped Rob. "I didn't know he ever play billiards."

"Of course you didn't. People in Rosedale never know what is going on in New York."

More food for thought for our hero. Everything looked so plausible as Graves explained it.

"Hello, Graves!" exclaimed a flashily-dressed man who came up to where they were standing. "Will you try a game to-night?"

"No, I guess not," was the reply. "I have a friend in charge here whom I am showing around. My friend Judge Wrecker, Mr. Ross."

The two men shook hands, and then began a conversation about the amusements of New York city.

"Do you play billiards, Mr. Ross?" the judge asked.

"I don't think I really understand the game as it is played here in New York," said Robert, shaking his head.

"It's the same all over America, I think," said the judge. "Suppose we try a game or two and burnish up your knowledge of it. It will do you good."

To be invited by a real live judge was too much for our young hero. He hesitated and looked at Graves.

"Of course, play a game or two," said Graves. "I'll wait for you."

In a weak moment he accepted the challenge and took down a cue.

Judge Wrecker selected one also, and called for the balls.

A man promptly put on the balls, and the game commenced.

Robert really had a fondness for the game, and was no mean player. Wrecker played badly, and Rob won easily.

"You play very well indeed, Mr. Ross, for one out of practice," remarked the judge.

"I didn't know I could play so well," returned Rob, laughing good-naturedly.

"Well, let's try another game; I think I can beat you yet."

"All right," said Robert.

While the second game was progressing the judge ordered champagne for the party.

It was brought, but Robert declined to drink.

"Not drink champagne!" exclaimed the judge, staring at him as though he was a decided curiosity.

"I never drink intoxicating liquors," said Robert.

"Give me your hand on that, Mr. Ross. I never fail to recognize a good example and follow it. Take this away, and bring us a bottle of cider, waiter."

"Oh, I can drink cider," said Robert. "That's something that never makes a fool of a man."

The sparkling cider was brought. It was really the same champagne that had been sent back.

Robert took up one of the glasses, and drank it down.

"That's the finest cider I ever tasted," he said, as he set his glass back on the waiter.

"Yes, they have the best at this place," assented the judge. "Will you have another glass of it?"

"Well, I don't mind if I do."

The second glass quickly followed the first one, and then the game went on.

Robert felt the effects almost instantly, but never suspected that alcohol was the active principle at work.

He grew lively, witty, and vivacious, and, after the game, wanted to play another.

"No," said Graves, "not too much at one time. We have other places to visit to-night, and so had better be going. We'll meet you here to-morrow evening, judge, and have another game with you."

The judge shook hands with both, and expressed an earnest desire to cultivate Robert's acquaintance.

"That's one of the most eminent judges in the State," remarked Graves, as they emerged upon the street. "I saw nearly every one in the house wondering who the young man was who was playing with Judge Wrecker. I am glad you have made a good impression on him."

"Where shall we go now?" Robert asked.

Graves looked at his watch.

"I guess we had better go home," he said, "and get some sleep, or we'll both have a head on us to-morrow morning. I'll walk up the avenue with you," and locking arms with him, he walked him all the way up to the mansion of the great merchant.

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

And agreeing to meet at the same place the next evening, they parted.

"That's a good start," muttered Gerald Graves to himself, as he sauntered down the avenue again. "He would have been blind drunk in another hour, but that would never do. He would swear off to-morrow, and not touch another drop. I'll make him a drunkard by degrees, and make Jessie White cast him off as a lover. I swear by the stars above me this night that she shall yet be mine."

The next morning Rob had a bit of a head on him, but he attributed it to the late hour he kept.

"I'll soon get over that," he hesitatingly remarked. "One cannot afford to know nothing in New York, and I am determined to get acquainted with all the big men that Graves knows."

That night, and for a week, every evening, he met Graves, and went about the city with him, always winding up at the Billiard Palace, as the place was called.

Judge Wrecker was always there to challenge him to a game of billiards.

He soon became an adept at the game, and could play as well as many professionals, and as for drinking, he took champagne under the impression that it was sparkling cider, which, Judge Wrecker had told him, was the drink used by the best temperance people in the city.

One evening they dropped in at the Billiard Palace, and took a game or two, and had several glasses of the bogus cider. Nearly every table in the establishment was occupied. Robert and Graves took off their coats, and entered into the game with all the earnestness imaginable. With each game they took a drink of the treacherous champagne, and the result was a bad case of intoxication for Robert.

Graves wanted to stop playing when he saw how full Robert was getting, for he did not wish to have him do anything that would cause his uncle to remove him before he had completely ruined him.

"One more game," said Rob. "Just (hic) one more game."

"I guess we'd better stop," said Graves, putting up his cue, and going for his coat.

Another man took his cue to play with a friend who was waiting for Robert's cue.

"Come, Ross," said Graves. "Let's go out and take a walk."

"No, I want to (hic) play billiardsh," was the reply.

"You've played enough," said the stranger who was waiting to take his place. "Let somebody else have a show, won't you?"

"You go to (hic) grass," retorted Robert, angrily.

"You're no gentleman, sir," returned the stranger, bristling up. "I won't go to grass for you or any other jackass!"

There was a man passing with a tray full of beer glasses at that moment. He got before Robert just as the latter made a spring at the stranger, and was sent rolling on the floor, scattering the glasses in every direction. Robert fell with him. When he rose to his feet half a hundred men had gathered around the spot.

Both men rose to their feet mad as hornets. Robert sought the man he was offended with. The beer man tried to strike Robert, and a dozen pitched in to help preserve the peace. A disinterested spectator would have thought it a free fight in which every man struck his nearest neighbor.

Suddenly there was a glass thrown. It flew through the air and struck the head of the man who had insulted Robert. Down went the head, and the glass was shattered into a dozen pieces.

"Murder!" shrieked a voice, and instantly the combatants ceased struggling to glare at each other.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WAGES OF DRINK—ROBERT ROSS' DESPAIR.

The excitement was so great that no one seemed for a minute to know who was hurt. That awful cry of "Murder!" seemed to ring in the ears of everyone in the great hall; for they all looked as though they were still listening to it when the man who had been carrying the tray asked:

"Who throwed that glass?"

Of course no one answered.

They continued to stare at each other, as though expecting some one of their number to own up and surrender.

"Jim Dodd is killed!" cried a voice in the crowd; and then there was a scattering, followed by a massing of the men present. Some seemed eager to get away, others appeared more eager to press forward and get a look at the dead man, if he was dead.

It was at that moment that Gerald Graves clutched Robert Ross' arm, and whispered in his ear:

"What have you done? Come away, quick! or it will be too late!"

Robert seemed like one in a dream. He made no attempt to move away from the spot, but permitted Graves to lead him away.

"You have killed him!" Graves whispered to him, as soon as they reached the street, "and must get away, or you'll be arrested!"

"Killed him!" groaned Rob, now completely sobered by the terrible situation in which he found himself.

"Yes; you broke a beer glass on his head. His head is as badly broken as the glass is. I never saw such a fool in my life!" and Graves carried him hurriedly along the street, as if extremely anxious to save him the penalty of the law.

In the meantime Jim Dodd lay on the floor of the Billiard Palace, as one dead.

The men crowded around, and gazed upon the unconscious form as though a dead man was a sight seen only once or twice in a life-time.

No one saw or noticed Robert Ross when he left the saloon, so busy were they all in looking at the face of the dead man.

One man knelt on the floor, and placed his hand on the heart of Dodd.

"Is he dead?" a voice asked, in a half whisper.

"Guess he is," was the reply. "Arrest the murderer, whoever he is."

Then everybody looked up and at each other.

"Who threw the glass?" a dozen asked at once.

"Yes, who threw the glass?"

They looked at each other again, but made no answer.

"Who saw it thrown?" one man asked, looking around.

"Speak out, or some innocent man may be accused."

No man spoke.

Two minutes passed, and then the man who had laid his hand over the dead man's heart asked:

"Did no man in this crowd see anybody throw a glass?"

"I didn't," said one.

"Nor I—nor I!" chorused every man in the crowd.

"That's strange," quietly remarked the man, looking over the crowd. "I never saw anything like it in my life. Every man here seems to be afraid he'll be made a witness in a murder trial. Where's the young fellow who started the row—the youngster who was too full to know what he was doing?"

Then every man turned and looked around in search of Rob Ross.

He was gone.

"Ah!" exclaimed a dozen at once, "'twas he! He threw the glass, else why should he run away?"

"Who was he?"

"Who knows him?"

"His name is Rob Ross," said a man in the crowd, "and he clerks for Silas Ross & Co."

"Every man was astonished.

The name of Silas Ross & Co. was familiar to every man, woman, and child in New York. It was a name they all respected, by reason of its solid worth and character.

"Where does he live?"

No one knew.

Just then two policemen, who had been summoned in from the street, came up and took charge of the body.

"Who did this?" one of them asked.

"Rob Ross!" responded a dozen at once, so strongly were they all impressed by the absence of our hero.

"Who is he?"

No one knew.

"Where does he live?"

No one could tell.

"He clerks for Ross & Co.," said someone in the crowd.

That was as much as any of them knew.

An ambulance came, and the dead body was taken away.

Then the police commenced making inquiries about Robert Ross. They could not learn much.

But they ascertained that he lived with his rich uncle up on Fifth avenue, and forthwith they repaired to the merchant's residence to arrest the young man.

A guard was set around the house, and a search at all the ferries was ordered.

Gerald Graves carried Rob home with him.

"The police will go at once to your home to arrest you," he said. "Come to my quarters and stop there till you can get out of the city."

"My God!" groaned poor Rob. "I was warned against all this."

"Against what?"

"Going round New York of nights and visiting drinking places. I've been drinking myself. I was drunk, and did not know what I was doing."

"Why did you drink so much. I never get drunk myself."

"I didn't know it would make me drunk."

"Well, you've been tight nearly every night this week. I should think you ought to know something about it by this time."

Robert could make no reply. He could only groan in the deepest anguish:

"Oh, my poor mother! My poor father! It will kill them! Uncle Silas will send me home, and——"

"The court will either send you to State's prison or the gallows," put in Graves, interrupting him. "I would not wait for it, if I were in your place. I would go to Europe, California, or some other place, where they could not find me. I'd never wait to be arrested and tried for my life."

"I—I—don't remember throwing the glass," said Rob, turning deathly pale.

"But a dozen men saw you throw it. You were too drunk to know what you were doing."

"Did you see me throw it?"

"Yes, I did!"

Robert groaned in the deepest depth of his soul.

"Oh, my God! I don't know anything about it. I don't believe I threw it."

"But when a dozen men swear that you did throw it you will be obliged to believe it. At least the court and jury will believe it, and that will settle the case against you. It's too bad! Too bad!"

Robert followed Graves to his bachelor apartments, and the door was locked.

"Don't be uneasy about anyone coming here," said Graves. "These are my private quarters, which but few of my friends know of. There's no danger here. You could stay a month and never get found out."

Robert drew a long breath of relief and sank down into an easy chair. His face was ashen pale. He was the picture of despair, for now the words of his father came to his mind. He had been fully warned, and now he found himself in the worst condition he could have imagined under any circumstances.

"Oh, my God!" he sobbed aloud, as if unable to hold in any

longer. "I was warned of all this! I did not know I was doing it. Oh, why cannot I die and end all this? I would rather die than look my parents in the face again. And she!—what will she say? Oh, Jessie!—Jessie! I've broken your heart and lost you forever!"

He buried his face in his hands, and rocked to and fro in an agony of distress painful to behold.

CHAPTER V.

THE SCHEMING VILLAIN.

Gerald Graves watched the griefstricken young man, and occasionally put in a word of consolation.

"You needn't take it so hard," he said. "A few years of absence will settle it so you can return."

"But I will stand accused of murder," Robert said, "and my absence will be evidence of guilt. I ought not to run away."

"Well, if you prefer hanging, or a life term in prison, you can take your choice," Graves remarked. "As for me, I'd rather kill a dozen men and be branded as the worst fiend in the world, than suffer the penalty for one murder. No, sir; no sickly sentimentality for me."

Robert groaned again.

He knew that Graves was right—that all that a man hath will he give for his life.

"You must stay here for a few days," Graves said, after a pause, "and I will see how things are working. I will do all I can to help you get away. If you need money I will let you have as much as you want, so don't trouble yourself about that."

"Oh, it's not that—not that!" sobbed Robert; "it's the disgrace I've brought on my parents and sisters. They love me so, and counted so highly on my future. My poor father will be heartbroken, for he warned me against all this. Oh, if I had a pistol I would blow out my brains! I cannot survive it. I would rather die than live!"

Graves was astonished at his grief, and was skeptical about his desire to die, and laid his revolver on his bureau where Robert could see it, and began to undress for bed.

Suddenly he saw Robert dart forward and seize the revolver. There was a look of intense desperation in his eyes.

Click, click!

He cocked it.

Another brief moment and the muzzle of the deadly weapon was placed against his forehead.

A scream escaped Graves involuntarily, as he sprang forward to clutch his arm.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Graves, "hold on, Ross!"

The next moment he struck the weapon, knocking it up, causing it to discharge its contents about an inch above his head, and sending the bullet through the French plate mirror of his dressing-case.

Graves wrenched the weapon from his hand and exclaimed:

"You are a fool, Rob Ross!"

"Yes—an idiot," groaned Rob, dropping into his chair again. "But for you I would have been out of all my trouble."

"Do you know it's a cowardly act to kill one's self?" Graves asked.

"No. It's courageous when one feels that he ought to do it."

"But you ought not to do it, because you are not prepared to die."

"Yes—yes, I know that, I know that," and he groaned again.

"Ross," said Graves, "come to bed and sleep. You'll feel better to-morrow. I will stand by you and do all I can for you. Just keep cool now and you'll come out all right."

Robert did as he desired.

He seemed to have lost all his command of himself, and yielded everything like a child.

But did he sleep any that night?

Graves knew that he did not, for he heard groans and sighs all through the night.

The next morning they arose and dressed themselves. Robert was pale and silent. He was in the depths of despair, for he felt he had lost Jessie White forever, to say nothing of his parents and sisters.

He sat down and waited till Graves was dressed for the street.

"Just keep your seat," said Graves to him, "and I'll have a breakfast sent up for you."

"But won't you betray my presence here?" he asked, in great apprehension.

"Oh, I'll have it brought to the back room. No one can see you here. Just be easy on that score," and Graves went out to a restaurant, and ordered a breakfast for one sent up to his room.

When the breakfast came Graves received it in person, and had it spread on a little table in the back room, after which he closed and locked the door.

Then Robert sat down and ate heartily of the meal.

"Won't you eat, too?" he asked of Graves.

"No. Had I ordered for two I would have been suspected of harboring you. It is known that you and I are great friends, and that we were together last night. I will go out to another restaurant for my breakfast. If anyone knocks at the door don't stir or say a word. I have a key, and will come in without knocking."

Graves then went out to go to another restaurant to get his own breakfast.

On the way he was jubilant.

"Oh," he exclaimed, striking his left hand with his right, "I have worked this thing down fine. I'll get him out of the way and have the coast all clear to myself. She shall be mine. She would not own him as an acquaintance now, much less as a lover. She'll grieve a few months, and then pride will make her forget him. I will then step in and secure the prize. Oh, I have got the trump cards in my own hands now. I knew I would fetch him some time, but this is better than I expected. Everything works well."

He went down the street some distance to a restaurant he was not in the habit of patronizing, and there took his breakfast.

Not for months had he felt so satisfied with the course of human events as on this morning. Everything tasted good to him, and his conscience never once upbraided him. In fact, he never had any trouble with his conscience in his life, hence his digestion was not in any way impaired by reason of the condition of Robert Ross.

After eating Gerald Graves returned to his quarters, and found Robert anxiously waiting for him.

"Did you bring a paper with you?" Robert eagerly asked, the moment the door opened.

"No," was the quiet reply of the false friend. "It is best for you not to see the papers this morning, my dear friend. There is nothing for you to do but to disguise yourself and get out of the country as soon as you can. You don't want to go to court and from there to the gallows."

"Gerald Graves," said Robert Ross, straightening himself up to his full height, "I never threw that glass. I can now distinctly remember everything I did last night. I remember springing at Dodd and rolling over with that waiter on the floor. I never took a glass in my hand. The glasses rolled all round on the floor. The waiter and I rose to our feet and were about to pitch into each other when I heard the crash of that glass. I never threw it!"

"Bob," said Graves, shaking his head, "you were too full to know what you were doing. I saw you when you hurled the glass, and so did a dozen others. In court we would be compelled to tell the truth, even though our best friend perish in consequence. My advice to you is this: Write letters to your parents, and leave them with me to deliver, and then leave the country. They would rather know that you were a wanderer somewhere in the wide world than lying where the hangman would put you. You can disguise yourself to-night and leave the city, and I will give you money enough to take you to any part of the world you wish to go."

"I will think about it during the day," he said. "I hardly know what to do. I did want to see the papers and know the worst."

"Which would only make you feel all the more keenly your position. Just let the papers alone."

Graves spent the greater part of the day with him, and then went out in search of a disguise for him. He returned, after an hour's absence, with a wig and beard.

"These will so change your appearance," he said, as he laid them on the table before him, "that your own mother would not know you."

Robert took them up and looked at them in profound silence for nearly a minute.

"Yes," he said, "I think they will conceal my identity, but——"

"But what?"

"Nothing," and he turned to the glass to adjust the beard and wig on.

Graves looked on in silence for a minute or two, and then remarked:

"You must have your hair cut, in order to make the wig set right."

"It won't do to have a barber do it."

"No. I can do it myself," and with that Graves took a small pair of scissors from his bureau and proceeded to cut all the hair off Robert's head. In a few minutes he had the floor strewn with the black curly locks that Rob had been so proud of.

"Now put it on."

The wig fitted splendidly, and then the beard completed the transformation.

"Ah! Your own father would not know you!" exclaimed Graves. "Why, you can walk the streets of New York without fear of detection."

CHAPTER VI.

ROBERT GOES AWAY, BUT TAKES THE NEXT TRAIN BACK.

Robert looked in the mirror, and thought, as did Graves, that the disguise was a good one.

"Yes," he remarked. "It's a good one. I will go out, and——"

"No. I wouldn't do that yet, Ross," Graves said. "You had better wait till night, when I will go with you down to the ferry. I'll buy a ticket for you to any part of the world you wish to go, and give you five hundred dollars besides."

Robert wheeled, and glared at him in astonishment.

He could not understand such generosity.

"Why, Graves!" he exclaimed. "How can I ever repay you all that money?"

"Oh, never mind that, Ross. I never go back on a friend. Just give me a written acknowledgment of the money, and I will store it away to keep as a reminder that I have done some good in the world."

Tears came into Robert's eyes, and he grasped Graves' hand.

"Gerald Graves!" he faltered. "I will never forget your kindness, and you may rest assured that I will repay that money. It will be a sacred thing with me."

"Ah! I know you well enough to know that, Ross," Graves replied. "Just sit down and write the acknowledgment, and I will give you the money right now. I would as soon think of going back on my brother as you."

"N. Y., June 18, 18—.

"Received of Gerald Graves the sum of five hundred dollars, as a loan 'to a friend,' which I agree to repay as soon as circumstances will permit.

Robert Ross."

"There, will that do?" he asked, handing the paper to Graves.

"Yes," was the reply. "It's all right," and he folded up the note and put it in his pocket. Then he counted out the amount in gold and gave it to him.

"I will buy your ticket myself to-night at the ferry," he added. "Where do you want to go?"

"I don't know. Where ought I to go?"

"Go to Texas and write to me. Your letters to your parents would be opened by detectives, and lead to your arrest. Change your name, and in your letters mention no names, so you cannot be traced up. I will deliver any message you may wish to send."

Robert buried his face in his hands. He could not endure the pain of leaving all his friends forever.

He finally wrote a letter to his father, in which he denied in the most emphatic manner that he threw the glass at Dodd or any one else. He said:

"I am accused of it, however, and understand that several persons are ready to swear that I did; hence I am going away until time and circumstances shall vindicate me. I hardly know what to say about not being on my guard after the impressive warning you gave me. One thing I can say in all sincerity, and that is, I didn't mean to forget all you had told me. I was not aware that I was not doing right till it was too late. New York has been too much for me, and when I am vindicated, as I surely will be some day, I will go on a farm as you did, and never visit the city again. Forgive me, father, mother, for my heart is breaking. My friend, Mr. Graves, will hand you this.

Your son,

"Robert Ross."

Robert sealed the letter, addressed it to his father at Rosedale, and gave it to Graves.

Graves looked at it, and asked:

"Is this all?"

"Yes."

"Have you no message or note to be delivered to anyone else?"

"No."

A look of surprise came into Gerald Graves' face.

He expected that Robert would give him a letter to Jessie White, and was astonished that he did not.

"Be careful, Ross," he said. "Don't go to writing to any of your relatives or friends through the mail. It would surely lead to your detection and arrest even in China."

"All right, Graves. I will not write to anyone but you when I leave New York."

"You will leave to-night?"

"Yes."

Graves remained with him till night, and then accompanied him down to Jersey City ferry.

"What name will you adopt, Ross?" he asked as they walked down Broadway.

"Ross Roberts," he said. "That will not sound strange to my ears like some other name would."

"Very good; I like that. Don't fail to write and let me know how you get on when you stop and settle down."

When they reached the ferry, Graves purchased a ticket to Galveston, Texas, for him, and waited to see him off the train.

They shook hands just as the train moved out of the car shed, and then Graves started to return to the city.

"Ah! That clears the coast for me now!" he mentally exclaimed, as he made his way back to the ferryboat. "I can go to his father, give him his letter, and thus prove to him that I was his son's friend when he most needed a friend, and she will not be long ignorant of it. It will give her a tender feeling toward me, and that is all I want. With him out of the way I will not fail to make the impression I desire to make. Oh, I have played it fine!"

But Robert was doing some very hard thinking in the meantime.

"I don't half like this running away," he muttered to himself ere the train had reached Newark. "I don't believe I threw that glass. I know I was not so very drunk that I didn't know what I was doing. I know I didn't throw it; but my running away will make everybody believe that I did. Hanged if I don't go back, change my disguise, and stay in the city till I find out more about this thing. I can't understand how such a good friend as Gerald Graves can swear that I threw that glass. There's something wrong about it. I'll take the next train back from Philadelphia."

On reaching Philadelphia, he promptly bought a return ticket, and by breakfast time was back again in the city.

The first thing he did was to visit a costumer's and change his beard and wig for another color.

"Graves himself won't know me now," he said, as he walked out on the street again. "I'll get a breakfast, and then hunt up some of those fellows who were present when that glass was thrown."

Entering a restaurant, he ordered a steak and a cup of coffee.

While waiting for it a stout, muscular looking man came up and took a seat at the same table with him. He eyed our hero very closely for several minutes, and then remarked:

"You came in from Philadelphia this morning, sir."

Robert was dumfounded.

He had changed costumes since returning, and yet this man knew him.

"I—I—yes," he replied in a stammering kind of way.

"And changed your disguise since reaching the city."

"Yes; who in the thunder are you?"

"I am a detective," was the quiet reply.

Robert turned ashen pale for a moment, but the next moment he regained his self-possession.

The detective smiled very blandly, and said:

"Of course you are my prisoner."

"Of course I am—not!" hissed Robert, drawing a revolver, which he had purchased in Philadelphia, and leveling it at the detective's head. "Hold up your hands!"

The astonished man-catcher promptly threw up both hands.

"Don't shoot!" he gasped.

"March out!" hissed Robert.

"Yes," and the man rose to his feet and started toward the door, Robert following him with the muzzle of his revolver within a foot of his head.

not understand what it was about; hence they stood with open mouths, and glared at Robert and the detective in silence.

When the man reached the door, Robert said to him:

"Keep on now, or you'll get more lead in your head than you can carry."

"All right," replied the detective. "Only be careful with that iron."

"I am not careless, as you must know," returned Rob, and then he quickly turned and dodged into the doorway of a saloon, which he entered, passed through, as if to go to the rear, and made his exit to a side street.

"Ah!" he ejaculated; "I am out of that scrape, and very nicely, too. Didn't know I had so much nerve and decision. Hanged if I didn't think he had me bagged for the Tombs. How in the world did he penetrate my disguise? That's what I'd like to know. I've got to change again, clothes and all, so he can't recognize me when we meet. I am going to find out who threw that glass and clear myself from the charge of murder. If I let 'em catch me and lock me up I won't have any chance to find out who did throw it."

During the few moments of mental converse with himself, Robert lost no time in getting away from that dangerous locality. He knew the detective would soon tumble to the game and begin the chase anew, with probably half a hundred excited citizens at his heels.

Running down the street, he turned into a second-hand clothing store. Of course a son of Abraham kept it.

"I want a suit of clothes for a man about my size," he said to the dealer.

"Mine frent," said the delighted Jew, "I haf got dem glose vot vos mate for you. I haf geep dem glose all de times for you. Dis way. I shoost knew you would goom mit der monish for dem."

He led the way into the rear end of the little store, and showed him suit after suit of clothes, either too small, too large, or too old.

"I guess you haven't got what I want," Robert said, after looking about for upwards of half an hour.

"Mine gracious!" exclaimed the Jew. "I haf got dem glose someveres. Shust wait un' see auf I tole you von lie apout it," and he produced another batch of ready-made suits. Robert carefully examined them, and selected a suit that would make him as complete a country boy in appearance as he could wish. They would so alter his general make-up that he resolved to try them.

"What's the price?" he asked.

"Feefty tollar."

Robert looked at the old blade to see if he really meant what he said.

The bland smile on the face of Israel assured him that he had heard aright.

But he did not know that the Jew had inferred from the haste in which he entered the store that a pressing necessity of some kind had accelerated his movements, and that a change of clothes was very necessary to him. The old Jew had dealt with such customers before.

"Fifty dollars, did you say?" Robert asked.

"Yash, mine frent, an' dey vos dirt sheap at dot brice."

"But wouldn't you be satisfied with one hundred?" Rob asked, sarcastically.

Israel looked up and gave another bland smile.

"So hellup me, Moses!" he said. "I didn't vos know you got so much monish."

"I'm glad you didn't," Robert remarked, "or you would have ruined me. I will give you just ten dollars for that suit—not a cent more."

The Jew wagged his head from side to side, and said:

"You don't vos dook me for a fool, eh? Auf you vant dem glose dey is vort feefty tollar. Auf you don't vos vant dem dey

CHAPTER VII.

ROBERT'S NERVE PULLS HIM THROUGH A TIGHT PLACE.

The waiters in the restaurant were astounded at the sudden turn things had taken. It was so sudden that they could

is vort feeftteen tollar. Dem bolice don't vos know you in dem glose, my frent, un' you shoost go up mit dem an' shoooken hants, an' dey don't vos know you."

Robert saw that the clothing dealer knew the situation, and that he was resolved to fleece him.

"Look here, old son of the brimstone-burner," he whispered, "I'll just give you twenty-five dollars for this suit, and you must get me a wig and beard besides."

"Moses an' Aaron!" gasped the Jew, holding up both hands in holy horror. "I vos gifen glose away dis time."

"Neither am I giving fifty dollars for ten-dollar suits," returned Robert. "Get the wig and beard—red, you understand—and you can have your money. Come, be lively."

"So hellup me, Shacob, I vos not——"

Robert wheeled on him and hissed:

"That's all I can pay. You think I have more. I will cause a funeral in Israel if you don't move up lively!"

"Och! dot vos pad," and the old sinner pulled out a secret drawer, from which he selected a red beard and wig.

Robert quickly tried on two, and then found himself suited.

"You can have the old wig and beard," he said. "But the other clothes you must keep till I call for them. Here's your money."

He handed the old rascal twenty-five dollars, and then hastily donned the suit he had just bought. The change was a very decided one, and Robert felt perfectly safe for the time being.

"Ah!" said the Jew. "Dat ish goot. Your own farder won't know you."

"Oh, I'll have a little fun and then bring the wig and beard back to you," said Rob. "I don't care anything about the police. It's a joke on some friends I am playing."

The Jew smiled, wagged his head, and said:

"It's no schoke, mine frient. Auf you blay dem schokes von dime doo much dere vill pe nodings to bay mit you."

Robert left the store, and walked out on the street again. He had now no fears of the detective, so he concluded to make his way back to the very restaurant whence he had just made his exit so suddenly.

To his surprise he found the police busy keeping the people back. Everybody who passed wanted to know what everybody didn't know about it, and so thousands stopped to inquire.

The detective was detailing his experience with a certain prisoner he had arrested, and the police were trying to get on the track of the fugitive, and keep the street open besides.

Robert elbowed his way through the crowd, and entered the restaurant, where he took a seat at a table, called for his breakfast, and quietly proceeded to dispose of it.

"What's the matter here?" he asked of the waiter, when the meal was brought.

"A detective bagged a cull," replied the waiter, "and got landed himself."

Robert did not understand it all, not being familiar with New York slang, and wisely concluded not to be too inquisitive.

The police finally succeeded in dispersing the crowd, and then Robert sauntered out of the restaurant, passing the detective at the door.

"I say, mister," the detective accosted him, "were you in here when that fellow drew his revolver on me?"

"No. Why?"

"Oh, I want to know who saw him, that's all."

"Did he try to shoot you?"

"No; he only made me believe that he would do so if I didn't skip."

"What did you believe him for?" Robert asked.

"Well, you see, I had to, mister. A loaded revolver pointed

at your head is one of the most powerful persuaders in the world. I never argue against 'em."

"I guess you are right," remarked Robert, passing out on the street. "What was the fellow up to, anyhow?"

"Oh, he was wanted for good cause. Just wait till I get my eyes on him again. He took me rather sudden that time. I'll get in some of my quick work next time, you bet," and the man walked off up the street, looking sharply to the right and left for a glimpse of the man who had turned the tables on him, not dreaming that the country-dressed man he was just talking to was the one he was in search of.

CHAPTER VIII

GERALD GRAVES IN ROSEDALE—ROBERT ROSS' LETTER.

On the morning that our hero returned to New York from Philadelphia, resolved to sift the mystery to the bottom and free himself from the charge of murder, Gerald Graves, thinking his victim was speeding away Texas-ward, took the cars for Rosedale.

He had with him the letter Robert had written to his father, and to him he intended to make his first visit.

"They will soon let Jessie White know all about it," he muttered to himself, "and that will pave the way for me when I see her again."

Of course the news had preceded him to Rosedale. Everybody in the village had heard that Robert Ross had killed a man in New York, and fled to parts unknown. As every one in Rosedale liked Robert, all were more or less distressed about it, and the moment Graves stepped out on the platform of the Rosedale depot, the villagers commenced pelting him with questions.

"It was a sad affair, gentlemen," he remarked, shaking his head and looking as though he was very sorry indeed. "But Bob Ross is as innocent of any intent to kill Jim Dodd as you or I. Bob didn't even see him when he threw the glass. There was so many mixed up in the fight that he threw the glass at the crowd, not at anyone in particular. He is perfectly heartbroken over the situation."

"But where is he?" one asked.

"I know where he is, but would suffer death rather than give him away. I couldn't stand and see him carted off to State prison for a crime I know he didn't mean to commit."

He then went away, knowing that his words would be repeated all over Rosedale in a few hours, and was soon at the home of Robert Ross, now a supposed fugitive from justice.

He knocked at the door, and was met by Mrs. Ross, who did not know him.

"Is Mr. Ross at home?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, but not in the house," was the reply.

She appeared to be very much alarmed, suspecting him of being a New York detective.

"I would like to see him, ma'am," he said. "I have a letter from his son Robert, who requested me to deliver it in person, and——"

The unhappy mother pressed her hand on her heart, and said, huskily:

"I am his mother! Oh, my poor boy; my poor boy!" and then broke down entirely.

She would have fallen to the floor had not Graves sprang forward and caught her in his arms.

Just then one of her daughters, Nellie Ross, about Jessie White's age, came out into the hall and saw her mother.

She knew Gerald Graves by sight, but was not acquainted with him.

"Oh, mother!" she cried, running forward, "what's the matter? Are you ill?"

Mrs. Ross waved her hand and whispered to her:

"Take me to my room—send for your father."

"Where is the room?" Graves asked, taking her in his strong arms.

Nellie led the way into her mother's room, and he followed, bearing her in his arms.

Laying her on the bed, he asked, turning to Nellie:

"Where is your father?"

"Out in the orchard!" and darting out of the room, left him standing by the side of the bed.

Mr. Ross came in a minute or two later, and recognized Graves.

"Ah, Graves," he exclaimed, "what's the matter? What's all this about? Nellie, what ails your mother?"

"I have a letter which Robert gave me to place in your hands," replied Graves, handing him the letter which Robert had given him.

Mr. Ross' hand trembled like a leaf as he took the letter, and tore it open.

The well-known handwriting of his beloved son brought tears to his eyes, so much so that he could not read the letter.

"Daughter," he said, in a husky tone of voice, "read it; I can't see the words."

Nellie took the letter, and read it through. Graves heard every word of it.

When he declared his innocence his mother burst into tears again and cried out:

"Oh, I knew it! I knew my poor boy was innocent."

"Yes, he is innocent," said Mr. Ross, "for Robert never told a lie in his life. He was in bad company, and now suffers in consequence," and he wiped the tears away, and choked back the sobs that came up from his overcharged heart.

Nellie read on to the end, and then looked up at Gerald Graves with tears in her eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Graves!" she exclaimed, "may God bless you for your kindness to my poor brother."

"Thanks, Miss Ross," he said. "Robert was my friend. I would have gone to prison for him myself had it been necessary to save him," and he pretended to brush away a tear from his eye.

"Oh, we can never forget you, Mr. Graves," said Nellie, giving him her hand. "My poor brother needed a friend and found one in you."

"God bless you, sir!" sobbed Mrs. Ross, burying her face in her hands and falling back on the bed in a violent paroxysm of grief.

Mr. Ross took his hand and said, in a choking voice:

"My boy was not strong enough for the temptations of New York. I feared greatly for him, but this is worse than my most gloomy forebodings."

"It is truly unfortunate, Mr. Ross," said Gerald, returning the pressure of his hand. "But I have hopes that it will turn out all right in the end. Time may prove his innocence. I know of my own knowledge, though I saw the glass thrown, that Robert did not throw it at Dodd. He meant no harm to him. It was an accident, pure and simple; it was unfortunate that it struck a vital part and proved fatal."

"Do you know where he is now?" Mr. Ross asked.

"I do not. He said he would write to me under a certain name as soon as he was located. He rather suspected that your letters would be watched, hence said it would be safer to write to me. Of course, I will forward you every letter I receive."

"God bless you, sir," faltered the father. "I hope you may never feel what I do now."

"You must be very particular, Mr. Ross, and not let it be known that I brought any letter to you, or will bring you any

in the future, as they may set a detective after my mail. Of course, if he has any particular friend whom you can trust with the secret, it would be all right; but I advise you to be very particular about it."

"Yes, yes; we will let only one other know of it. Poor Jessie! Poor Robert!" and the father pressed down a sob, and paced round the room, as if active exercise was necessary to enable him to keep control of himself.

"I will go to my uncle's," said Graves, "and to-morrow will go back to the city. Any message you may wish to have delivered to Robert I will do so as soon as I hear from him."

"Oh, how can we ever thank you enough for your kindness, Mr. Graves?" said Nellie. "I know God will bless you, wherever you go, for your kindness to my poor brother."

"I am repaid a thousandfold already, Miss Ross, in the happiness of seeing you and your parents satisfied with what I have done. I will call again to-morrow morning, to get any message you may want to send."

Nellie followed him to the door, and showered her thanks upon him again.

"By George!" exclaimed Graves to himself, as he walked briskly down the street, "if I did not love Jessie, I could adore Nellie. Both are beautiful enough to sit beside a king. I never dreamed I was so hard-hearted and such a good actor. It's the prize that is at stake that enables me to pull through. Ah, Jessie! They will tell you all about what a good friend I am to Robert Ross, and it will touch your heart, as it did theirs. I'll bide my time. You shall yet be mine. I never let go when I once get a grip."

No sooner had Gerald Graves gotten well out of the way than Nellie Ross put on her hat and hastened to the cottage of the Widow White.

She found Jessie sick in bed from the terrible blow the news of Robert Ross' crime had given her.

"Oh, Jessie!" she cried, as she rushed into the room. "Here is a letter from brother, and he says he is innocent!"

With a glad cry, Jessie sprang up and snatched the letter from Nellie's hand.

She thought it was for her till she read "my dear father" at the beginning of it.

"Oh, it's not for me!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I brought it over for you to read. Read it."

She did read it, and her heart grew lighter as she did so. She could not believe that Robert was a murderer, and would not believe it even were it true. But when she came to where he spoke of the great friendship shown him by Gerald Graves, all the blood left her face.

She laid the letter down on her lap and looked hard at it for several minutes in the most profound silence. Nellie stood and gazed at her, wondering what she was thinking of.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAIDEN'S GRIEF AND THE VILLAIN'S SCHEME.

"What are you thinking of, Jessie?" Nellie asked, after the lapse of several minutes of profound silence.

The two girls were the best of friends, and seldom had any secrets from each other.

"Oh, Nellie," she replied. "I don't know what to think. My mind is filled with conflicting doubts and fears. I—I—" and, girl-like, she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

Nellie wept with her and tried to console her. But not knowing just the exact state of her feelings in regard to Gerald Graves, she did not succeed so well in her efforts.

She did not know that Gerald Graves had once proposed

to Jessie and been refused; and Jessie now regretted that she had not told Robert of it long ago.

"You know he says he is innocent," said Nellie, "and he never told a falsehood in his life. I would believe him against all the men in the world."

"So would I," Jessie returned, "but—but——"

"But what, Jessie?"

"They may believe the other men, and—and—oh!" and burying her face in her hands again the tears flowed afresh.

"But they haven't got the chance to do that," protested Nellie. "He has gone away to stay till his innocence is proved."

"Alas, one cannot prove his innocence by that means. He only can prove it, and people will say he is guilty because he ran away. Oh, Nellie, my heart is breaking!"

The two girls, wrapped in each other's arms, sobbed and moaned for an hour.

Suddenly Nellie arose and said:

"I am going home to write a message to be sent to him. Write what you will, and Mr. Graves will deliver it for you."

"No, no, no!" moaned Jessie. "Not now—not that way. I will wait and write some other time."

Nellie Ross looked at her in the greatest amazement. She could not imagine what was the matter with Jessie all of a sudden.

"Jessie," she asked, her voice choking with emotion, "are you angry with Robert?"

"No, no, I love him! I love him!" was the almost despairing cry of the heartbroken girl. "He is innocent. It's all a plot to ruin him," and she threw herself down on the bed again and burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

Nellie could stand it no more. She turned and left the house and wended her way back home, with Robert's letter clutched in her hand.

When Jessie White looked up from her pillow again she found herself alone.

Nellie had gone home.

"Oh, my poor Robert! My brave, true Robert!" she moaned, wringing her hands. "I now know that I am partly the cause of it all. I did not tell you, because I was afraid it would make you angry. Oh, why did I not tell you all? Had you not been on friendly terms with him this would never have happened. He swore I should never marry anyone else if I would not have him, and now he has led you into this, and given you money to go to the uttermost parts of the earth, where I can never see you again. Oh, I cannot write you through him! He would gloat over my sorrow, and I cannot bear that—anything but that!"

Jessie arose and paced her room like a caged bird.

She could not be still a single moment. Something kept urging her on to action.

"My poor Robert! My poor Robert!" she kept on saying as she paced to and fro in the room. "He must be at the bottom of it all, for he would have given anything to keep you out of the way. He wouldn't do anything to keep you here—oh, no—but he was glad to help you go ten thousand miles away from here. You are a victim of a demon, my beloved, and my heart does not condemn you."

All day long did the affianced of our hero pace to and fro in her room, moaning and wringing her hands in great mental anguish.

She would not be comforted. Her mother would have comforted her, but could not.

She was more practical than her daughter, and advised Jessie to think no more of him.

"I can't help it, mother," she said. "I love him, and can't love anyone else."

"There's no need of loving anyone else," said her mother. "You don't want to be the wife of a murderer, and——"

A scream from her daughter caused Mrs. White to run to her.

Jessie, on hearing her mother call, or speak of Robert Ross as a murderer, was so shocked that she had uttered a piercing shriek, and fallen in a dead faint.

Mrs. White was greatly alarmed, and the family physician was at once sent for, and several hours were spent trying to restore her to consciousness.

At last she opened her eyes again, and groaned piteously. She was put to bed and an opiate administered. A few minutes later she was sleeping.

Giving the necessary instructions to her mother, in case of restlessness, the physician went away, and mother and daughter were left alone together again.

The day and night passed, and morning came. Gerald Graves, true to his promise, called on the Ross family for letters or messages for Robert.

"Oh, Mr. Graves," said Nellie Ross, her eyes red with constant weeping while writing the letter she handed him, "you don't know how much we appreciate your kindness."

"And you will never know how much pleasure I experience in doing for a friend that which I know he would do for me," was the reply. "Some day Robert will come out all right, and then I will be proud that I stood by him in his hour of need. Is this all you have to send him—one letter?"

"Yes, sir. We all have sent him messages in that. We thought it best not to send him more than one letter."

"Oh, there's no more danger in a dozen letters than one," he said, a look of disappointment stealing over his face. "I can wait if there is another who would like to write him a few lines. I am in no hurry to return to the city."

"You are so kind," she returned, "but there is no other. I did go to a very dear friend of his with the letter you brought, but nothing was written."

An eager light shone in Gerald Graves' eyes, but he dared not ask any questions.

Telling Nellie that he would call again as soon as he had news of Robert, he bade her good-by, and left the house.

"Oh, but it's a fine game," he muttered to himself, as he wended his way toward the depot. "She does not want any more of him. Won't write to him. Going to go right back on him. I'll sail in as soon as she has had time to recover from the blow. Needn't be in a hurry about it. Got all the field to myself. Nellie and her parents are my best friends. Never had anything work so well in my life."

He hastened to the depot, entered the car, and sat down to think and chuckle over the success of his diabolical plot against his rival.

Seated in the car, he could not resist the opportunity to open and read the letter of Nellie Ross to her fugitive brother.

It was just such a letter as a true, loving sister would write to a brother in distressed circumstances. She went on to tell of their distress and hopes and fears, expressing a belief in his innocence. Then she spoke of her interview with Jessie White, saying:

"I found her completely prostrated by the news of your misfortune, groaning and wringing her hands like one inconsolable. Oh, it was awful to see her distress! She could not write, but said, and kept repeating it, that she loved you."

That was a damper on the archvillain's enthusiasm. He now understood why Jessie White would not write, or at least thought he did, and he did not feel so sure of an easy triumph.

On reaching New York he went out of the depot, took a carriage, and rode down to his bachelor quarters.

On alighting he put his hand into his pocket to draw out his purse to pay his fare, and discovered that it was gone.

"By the great jumping-jack!" he exclaimed. "I've lost my purse!"

The hackman gave a cynical smile, and remarked:

"Maybe yer didn't hev one, sonny?"

Graves was indignant.

A common hackman talk to him, Gerald Graves, that way!

"I want no impudence from you, sir," he said, stiffly.

"Waal, I want two dollars from you, an' no lip about it, either," returned Jehu, bristling up as though he wanted to knock him into the gutter.

"Call here at——"

"I don't call that way. I call yer now, an' ef yer don't come down yer will go down yerself, understan'?"

"Confound your impudence!" growled Graves, starting up the stoop. "I'll make——"

The cabman caught him and pulled him back.

Words followed, and blows were about to be struck, when a young man with red hair and beard ran up and said:

"Here, what's this about, eh?"

"Why, blast my eyes," exclaimed the hackman, gazing at the red-headed man, as if in the greatest amazement, "if this ain't red-headed Snoozer Bill!" and with that he aimed a blow at his head with his brawny fist.

The young man deftly dodged the blow, and sent one in return, which the other caught on his nose, and then went to grass.

CHAPTER X.

ROBERT RESCUES HIS ENEMY FROM A BEATING.

Gerald Graves was as thankful as he was astonished at the sudden change of the situation caused by the advent of the red-haired young man.

He glared at him, and wondered if he had ever seen or heard of him before.

"Oh, I'm Snoozer Bill, am I?" the young man asked, glaring savagely at the hackman. "You know me by that name, do you?"

"Blast your red top!" hissed the hackman, scrambling to his feet, "I'll knock all the cussedness out of you!"

"Oh, don't now," pleaded the young man, sarcastically. "Please don't hurt me. I'll tell your ma—look out!"

The infuriated hackman made an attempt to demolish the young man at a single blow. But, as at the first attempt, he miserably failed, and was again sent to grass by a blow between the eyes.

He sprang to his feet again and tried to clinch with him. Another blow made him groggy, and he reeled like a drunken man.

"What's the row about, anyhow?" the young man asked, turning to Graves, who had stood on the stoop an astonished spectator of the fight in his behalf.

"I came in on the cars this morning," replied Graves, "and never made the discovery that my pocket had been picked till I reached my door here. The hackman thought it was a put-up job on him, and would not listen to reason when I tried to tell him to wait till I could go upstairs and get the money."

"How much is the fare?"

"Two dollars," growled the hackman, who didn't care to try conclusions with the red-haired young man again.

"Is that all? Did you insult a gentleman for as small a sum as that? Here, take these two dollars and get away before I give you a good licking," and the red-haired young man gave the hackman two silver dollars, who pocketed them, and quickly mounted to his seat and drove away.

All this was done so quickly that but few people had time to gather about the spot. It happened that but few people

were passing along in that block at that hour, hence the whole thing was over before many knew of it.

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," said Graves, as the hack drove off. "If you will wait till I run upstairs I will bring the money down and repay you."

"All right, sir."

Graves entered the house and shut the door.

The red-haired young man walked briskly away, turning the corner, and making rapid strides down the avenue.

Two minutes later Gerald Graves appeared on the stoop with a two-dollar bill in his hand, but his benefactor was nowhere to be seen.

He looked up and down the street, but could only see a few children and nurses who had been witnesses of the fight.

"Why, where did he go?" he asked of one of the pretty nurses.

"He went down the avenue."

"Did he say he was coming back again?"

"I didn't hear him say anything at all, sir."

Graves went down to the corner, and looked up and down the avenue, but could see nothing of him.

"Hanged if that doesn't beat anything I ever heard of," he muttered, as he turned and made his way back to his quarters.

"I never saw the fellow before, and he doesn't even know my name. What can he mean by it, anyhow, I'd like to know."

The young man made his way down the avenue, chuckling to himself.

"I guess he'll have something to think about for some time to come," he said. "That hackman would have licked him if I had not put my hand in. It's his own money, but he doesn't know it. I didn't think he could penetrate this disguise. That rascally old Jew was right when he said my own father wouldn't know me."

The reader doubtless recognizes our hero in the red-haired young man.

Robert had strolled about in the many places he and Graves had been in the habit of visiting, expecting to find him at some of them. He made inquiry of a few, and was told that he had not been around that evening or during the day.

"I'll go round by his place in the morning," said Robert to himself, as he went out of one of the saloons, "and see if I can get a glimpse of him as he comes out of his quarters. I've got no particular business with him any further than to get sight of him again. It won't do to let him know that I am back in the city after he was so kind as to give me five hundred dollars to get out of the way of the sheriff. But I want to watch the crowd he goes with, and see if I can't find out something about who threw that glass at Jim Dodd."

The reader has seen how he met Graves, and rescued him from the clutches of a hackman, who would have beaten him unmercifully as a swindler.

"That was dangerous business for me," said Robert to himself after he had passed several blocks on the avenue. "If he had knocked my beard or wig off it would have given me away, and caused my arrest, and that would have spoiled everything."

The hackman, having got a pair of black eyes in addition to his two dollars, went away vowing vengeance on the red-haired young man who had proved himself more than a match for him. He had a partner in the hack business, to whom he gave an account of how he got his black eyes.

"Oh, just let me get at him!" said the man, who had long prided himself on being the "best man in the ward."

He mounted the seat in the afternoon alongside of his partner, and drove through the main streets in search of the red-haired young man.

Just before sunset he found him. The hackman pointed him out on Broadway, and his partner got down, and went up to him.

"Say, cully," he said, as he came alongside of Robert, "what's yer name, eh?"

Robert looked hard at the fellow, as if to fathom his motive in thus accosting him on the street.

"My name is Bob Hackett," he finally replied. "Who are you?"

"I am Jim Dunn. I can lick you," replied the other.

Bob was astonished.

He didn't understand what the trouble was.

"Maybe you can, and maybe you can't," he said. "I don't know anything about you, nor do I want to. I am not a prize-fighter."

"You licked my pard this morning," said Dunn, "and if you'll come down to Patsy Malone's back room I'll lick you out of your boots."

"But why should I go down to Patsy Malone's?"

"I want to lick you."

"Oh, you do, eh?"

"You bet!"

"Well, I won't go. I don't know you from Adam's cat. If you think you can lick me there's nothing to prevent you from doing it right here."

"Oh, yes, there is. There's a cop right across the street. Come down to Patsy's, and I'll give you the nicest basting you ever had in your life."

Robert looked at the man, and saw that he was a hard customer.

"No; I've got nothing against you. If you attack me I'll use lead, for you are a better man than I am. Keep away from me. I don't want any more blood on my hands."

Dunn looked hard at him a moment, and asked:

"Have you any blood on your hands?"

Robert turned quickly and glared fiercely at him.

"Yes, and on my soul, too, so keep away from me. I want nothing to do with you," and with that he turned away and walked up the street, leaving Dunn standing on the curb looking as sheepish as he felt.

But Dunn was not to be balked that way. He at once made up his mind to rush up to our hero, knock him down, and take the chances of dodging round the corner and getting away from the policeman.

Robert heard him coming just in time to wheel round and put up guard.

"Blast you!" hissed the bully, aiming a furious blow at Rob's head, "take that!"

"Oh—no—you take that!" returned Rob, deftly parrying the blow and giving him one between the eyes that rolled him in the gutter.

"Hi, there!" cried the policeman, dashing forward.

Robert turned and ran down the street. The policeman took Dunn in, which prevented pursuit of the other.

"Ketch t'other feller!" cried Dunn. "He knocked me down."

"He only defended himself," the officer said. "I saw the whole of it. Come on, or I'll give you the club."

CHAPTER XI.

ROBERT MEETS HIS COUSIN AND SAVES HER DIAMONDS.

Dunn was marched off to the station-house and locked up, having brought it on himself by his too eager desire to whip Robert.

"I must be careful after this," said Robert to himself, as he made his way down another street. "It won't do to let the police get hold of me. They would discover my disguise and then all would be up with me."

He went down some four or five blocks, and then turned to-

ward Broadway again. Hundreds of young ladies were on the street shopping, or returning from shopping.

Suddenly he heard a voice that sounded familiar to him, and turned around quickly to see who it was.

His heart almost jumped out of his throat, for he found himself face to face with his cousin, Celia Ross.

There was a look of sadness in her face, though she was talking gayly with a young lady companion of about her own age.

He could not resist the temptation to follow and gaze at her sweet face, for she had been kind to him during his brief stay with his uncle.

"Oh, if I only dared to speak to her," he said, after he had followed her a half dozen blocks, "and hear her say some kind word of me. I know Uncle Silas has denounced and disowned me, but I cannot blame him for it."

But he could not resist the temptation to follow her and her pretty companion up Fifth avenue toward the Ross mansion.

They never noticed the red-haired, country-looking youth that was following them so closely, and never knew of even the existence of such a person till they were attacked by a well-dressed desperado, who sprang round a corner, seized her by the shoulders, and attempted to tear her diamonds from her neck and ears.

Then, as Celia Ross uttered a scream, Robert sprang forward and sent the villain rolling in the gutter by a tremendous blow of his fist.

"Oh, thank you ever so much, sir!" cried Celia, clinging to his arm, while the ruffian scrambled to his heels and ran off with all the speed he could command.

"I am glad I was near enough to render you assistance," said Robert, changing his voice to prevent recognition.

"Why didn't you arrest him instead of letting him get away?" the other young lady asked.

"Because it would have been necessary for you two ladies to appear against him in court, and that would have been an unpleasant thing to do."

"Oh, how thoughtful of you!" the young lady exclaimed.

"Will you please walk with us till we reach our home?" Celia asked. "I am so nervous after what has happened that I can scarcely walk."

"With the greatest pleasure, miss," and he walked alongside of the two young ladies until they reached the Ross mansion.

"I am ever so much obliged to you, sir," said Celia. "I am sure papa and mamma would thank you for what you have done."

"That is entirely unnecessary, miss," he replied. "My name is Bob Hackett. Think of me sometimes, and I will always carry your sweet faces in my memory."

"What a pretty compliment!" exclaimed Celia. "I will give you my card, Mr. Hackett, and hope we may meet again some day. I won't forget you. Do you live in the city?"

"I have just come to the city, and am looking for work to do."

"Oh, then go down to papa's store in the morning, and I am sure he will give you something to do. He employs a great many young men."

"Many thanks for your kindness, Miss Ross. I may go there to-morrow." And then he lifted his hat off his head, bowed low, and turned away, to return down the avenue.

"What a pity it is his hair is red," remarked Celia Ross to her companion. "I detest red hair, and he is so brave and polite."

"Yes, his features are fine, but that horrid red hair spoils everything. Oh, dear me! Red hair is so unromantic!"

"Yes. I never heard of a red-haired poet in my life," assented the sentimental young lady.

Robert went away gloomy and as sad as one could well be under such circumstances.

"How I wish I knew just what they say about me up at uncle's," he muttered. And then tears came into his eyes, as a still greater wish to know what they say of him at Rose-dale.

A thought of his mother filled his heart with a pain that was worse than any knife could make.

"She gave me her card," he said, eyeing the small bit of card Celia Ross had given him. "Some day I may be able to tell her about this adventure this morning."

From Fifth avenue he made his way downtown again, just as the street lamps were being lighted.

"Graves is in town again," he said, "and will be sure to go round to some of the old places again. I'll go round and see if I can't meet up with him. He has been out to Rosedale, and must have seen my people. How am I to get any letter from them? He must not know that I am still in the city. That would never do."

After taking supper at a restaurant, he went around to several places in hopes of running across Gerald Graves. Bar-room after bar-room was visited, and he began to think he would have all his labor for nothing. At last, however, he saw him enter a certain saloon in company with two friends.

Their eyes met, and Graves at once recognized the red-haired fellow who had done him such a signal favor that morning.

"Ah," he exclaimed, darting forward and seizing Rob's hand, "I'm glad to see you. I owe you two dollars and a thousand thanks. Come and have a drink with us."

"Thank you, I never drink anything," replied Rob, shaking his head.

"Have a lemonade, then?"

"Yes; I drink that sometimes," and he stepped up to the counter.

"This is the man I was telling you about, fellows," said Graves to his two chums, "the one who punished the hackman for me. I don't know his name."

"My name is Robert Hackett," Rob said.

"Yes; and mine is Gerald Graves. This is my friend Reed, and this is Mr. Edgerton."

Rob shook hands with the two friends, and then they turned toward the bar to drink.

Reed and Edgerton both admired pugilism, and were of the opinion that Hackett was a noted pugilist.

"Here's to our better acquaintance, Mr. Hackett," said young Reed, clinking glasses with Rob.

"Yes," put in Edgerton. "I hope to learn how to use my hands as you do some day. Did you ever go into the ring, Mr. Hackett?"

"No," he replied, "but I have made it a rule to knock my man out whenever he gives me cause."

"You knocked that hackman out of time so nicely," said Graves, "that I've been thinking of it ever since. How did you acquire such skill?"

"Study and practice."

"Of course. I might have known that. Would you give lessons for pay?"

"Why, I don't know about that. I don't think I am competent to do it."

"The deuce you don't! Well, make me just half as competent as you are, and I will be content, and will give you one hundred dollars."

"I will think about it," Rob said. "I never did give sparring lessons."

"What's your business, Mr. Hackett?" Graves asked.

"I am not engaged in any business just now, sir. I am looking for something to do."

"Well, if you can't get anything to do come back to me, and I'll see what I can do for you. Here's the two dollars you paid

the hackman for me," and Graves gave him two dollars, which Rob took and pocketed.

The three men then went away, and Rob was no nearer his end than before he met them.

"I've made the acquaintance of Reed and Edgerton," he said, "and that will enable me to talk with them when we meet again. I think I'd better get me another suit of clothes, and appear less like a countryman. Then they won't be afraid of talking with me. It was a lucky thing for me I took boxing lessons from Finch when he came to Rosedale. It has stood me in good, and I may yet make it pave the way for a vindication of myself from the charge of having killed poor Jim Dodd with a beer glass."

From the saloon Robert made his way to the Palace Hall, where the glass was thrown on that fatal night.

There he found many young men playing billiards, some of whom he recognized as regular frequenters of the place.

"Some of these must have seen that glass thrown," he said, "and maybe I can get information that may clear me of the charge."

CHAPTER XII.

ROBERT RECEIVES AN UNEXPECTED REVELATION.

Taking a seat near one of the billiard tables, he watched the game going on between a couple of young men. They were both good players, but one of them was too drunk to know much about what he was doing.

The game became interesting from the fact that the players had considerable money at stake on the issue of it.

The sober man would make one point and then shove five forward on the string.

"Hold on there!" cried Rob. "You made a mistake. You move seven buttons when you only made two points."

The half-drunken man dropped the butt of his cue on the floor, and looked hard at his opponent.

"Watcher doin'?" he asked.

"I say, greeny?" hissed one of the villain's chums, "ef yer don't slack that jaw I'll break it for yer!"

"Oh, don't do that," said Rob. "That would hurt, you know."

"Waal, cheese it."

"What's that?"

"Cheese it—shut up."

"Oh, you want me to hush up, eh?"

"Yes—or I'll break yer jaw."

"Oh, you can't do that."

"Can't I?"

"No."

The villain aimed a blow, Robert caught it on his left arm, and knocked the would-be bully clear under a billiard table.

Of course there was a row. Three or four jumped up and went for him. They belonged to a gang who were systematically going through the young fellow, who was too drunk to know what he was doing—or rather what the others were doing.

Robert knocked down two of them, and was then himself floored by a terrible blow from behind.

Scrambling to his feet, he looked around for his assailant, but could not find him. Some others had become mixed up in the row, and a general free fight was going on.

"I'd better get out of this before the police come in," he muttered to himself, and then he made a break for the door.

Just as he passed the door someone threw a glass at him. It missed its aim, and striking the door-facing was shattered into a thousand pieces.

"Another glass gone," he said, as he passed out into the street. "I wonder if I will be charged with throwing it?"

He got out just in time to escape the police, who rushed in and made several arrests.

Thinking he had made enough trouble that night he went to his hotel and retired.

The next morning he found an account in the papers of the row. His name was not mentioned, although he was described as a red-haired countryman, who astonished the rowdies by the manner in which he handled his maulers.

While at breakfast in a restaurant he saw the very man whom he had saved from being swindled come in and take a seat at the table opposite him.

"Hello!" he said, looking the man full in the face. "I saw you last night at Palace Hall."

The young man looked hard at him for a moment, and then asked:

"How is it you didn't get run in?"

"Because I ran out," replied Robert, laughing.

"Very good reason. You didn't see the row, then?"

"I saw as much as I wanted. I knocked three of 'em down. They wanted to clean you out with a skin game, and pitched into me because I told you about it."

"Oh, you are the red-haired fellow I heard about," and the young man changed seats so as to get nearer to Robert. "You did me a good turn last night. I must thank you for it."

"Oh, that's all right," said Rob. "I didn't want to see a man skinned that way, that's all. Who were those fellows, anyhow?"

"Oh, they belong to a respectable gang over on the west side, but I don't like their standard of respectability. It is supposed that one of the gang threw the glass that killed Jim Dodd there last week."

"Why, I thought young Ross was the one who threw it," exclaimed Rob, in the greatest amazement.

"Well, he didn't," said the man, "for I was looking at Ross the time the glass was thrown, and know that he didn't do it, for he was too drunk to throw a glass across the room, much less kill a man with it."

Robert's heart came up into his throat. He wanted to jump up and hug the man to his heart. But he wisely refrained from becoming too demonstrative, and asked:

"How is it, then, that Ross was accused of throwing it?"

"Oh, nobody said he did, except Gerald Graves. But since Ross ran away almost everybody believes that he did. They could not do otherwise. But I and several others know that he did not, for we can swear that we were looking at him at the time it was thrown. Ross was a fool for running away, I think."

"But he and Graves were great friends," said Robert. "Why should Graves charge him with the act?"

"Hanged if I know. It's one of the things no fellow can find out. Graves still professes the strongest friendship for him. But he is the only man that swore at the inquest that Ross threw the glass. All the others swore they didn't know who did throw it."

"Well, that's news to me. I never knew that before. Where is Ross now?"

"They say he has gone to Texas or California."

Breakfast being brought, Robert and young Hensler—that was his name—ate together, and soon became well acquainted.

After the meal they went out together.

"Come with me," said Rob to Hensler. "I want to buy a new suit of clothes, and want your judgment as to style and color."

"Certainly," and the two went together to a clothing store, where Robert bought a stylish suit of clothes, which he put on, and ordered the old suit sent to his hotel.

"Now I look more like a city chap, don't I?"

"Yes, decidedly," replied Hensler.

"Then my city acquaintances won't be ashamed to walk with me in the street."

"No, I guess not," and Hensler laughed good-naturedly and asked:

"Have any of them been trying to shake you?"

"Well, I thought some of them didn't want me along, that's all."

"You seem abundantly able to take care of yourself for all that."

"Oh, I can pay my way, and hold my own, I guess."

"I guess you can—What's the row now?"

People a block above were running to get out of the way of some impending danger.

Robert looked in that direction, and saw a horse coming at full speed, with a driverless cab behind him.

The most intense excitement prevailed. Everybody was getting out of the way, and the wild steed had the whole street to himself.

"Get out of the way!" cried Hensler, running into a store to be out of harm's way.

Robert did not appear to hear him. He glanced at the cab, and then made a spring for the middle of the street.

A cry of horror went up from the excited multitude on the sidewalk.

As the terrified horse came bounding along Robert made a grasp at the bit, caught it with a firm grip, and then ran with him.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEPHEW AND UNCLE MEET—TRYING TO CLEAR HIMSELF.

As the daring young man ran with the horse, he kept pulling him round with such force that, ere he went another block, he had succeeded in stopping him altogether, to the supreme astonishment of everybody who had witnessed it.

A cheer went up from some two or three hundred throats when the horse ceased his struggles and obeyed the firm hand on the bit, and a rush was made for the vehicle.

The first to reach it were a couple of policemen. One of them opened the door of the cab, and released the only occupant it contained—an elderly gentleman.

The moment the man came out Robert recognized in him his uncle—the great merchant.

"Young man," said the merchant, grasping his hand and shaking it warmly, "you have done me a great service—more than money can pay for. Give me your name."

"My name is Robert Hackett, sir," Rob replied.

Mr. Ross started, and looked hard at him.

"I've heard of you before, sir," he said. "You saved two young ladies from being robbed on the avenue the other evening, did you not?"

"Yes, sir; I knocked down a ruffian who tried to rob 'em."

"Yes; one of them was my daughter. She told me your name. You have placed me under a double obligation. Come down to my store. Here's my card. I want to talk business with you."

Robert took the card, and the merchant turned and re-entered his cab, while a new driver was engaged to drive him down to the store.

The moment the cab drove off a hundred men wanted to shake hands with our hero.

"Hackett, you lucky dog!" exclaimed Hensler, rushing up and shaking hands with him. "I thought you would be killed."

"Yes," said another, "it was a very dangerous thing to do."

"Not much danger," said Robert, "when one knows how to do it."

"But everybody doesn't know how to do it," said one of the policemen. "You have made a good friend in that Mr. Ross. He's one of the heavy merchants of New York."

"I am glad of that, for one can't have too many friends in this city, you know."

"I must go downtown, Hackett," said Hensler, "and will meet you at your hotel this evening if you like."

"Do so. I'll wait for you," said Robert, shaking hands with Hensler.

They parted, and Robert went back to his hotel to think and make up his mind as to what to do next. What Hensler had told him came like a thunderclap, for he was under the impression that every man who was present when Dodd was killed was ready to swear that he threw the glass, and now Hensler says that Graves was the only man who claimed to have seen him throw it.

"What does Graves mean by that kind of business?" Robert asked himself a dozen times, as he made his way back to the hotel. "I can't understand it. I was sure I didn't do it, but he made me believe that I did, and gave me money to get away on. What does he want me to leave New York for, I wonder? Hanged if I don't find out something about this, or die trying. If Graves is at the bottom of this I'll knock his head off his shoulders."

Robert never dreamed that Gerald Graves was in love with Jessie White, and wanted to get him out of the way that he might have the coast clear to himself. Had he known all that he would have been saved much sorrow and trouble.

But he knew nothing about it, and therefore was greatly puzzled to know why Graves was so generous to him.

"How am I to find out about this thing?" he asked himself a dozen times. "It won't do to let Graves know I am back in the city. Ah, I'll talk with Hensler to-night, and see if I can't get the names of all the men who were present at the time of the fight, and then I can see them all and get their side of the story."

He spent the day anxiously waiting for night to come in order to see Hensler again.

Hensler came at the appointed time, and then Rob asked him:

"Do you know all the men who were present when Dodd was killed?"

"Not all of them, but nearly all. I could find the others, though. Why do you ask?"

"Because I feel that a great injustice is being done Ross, and would like to look into it and see if he cannot be righted. Ross was a good fellow, and it's a shame to let him be driven from New York that way. He had come to New York to go into business with his Uncle Silas, and it forever blasts his reputation and makes him a wanderer among strangers."

"Were you well acquainted with him?"

"Yes. I knew him quite well, and a better-meaning fellow never lived."

"I think he was a good sort of a fellow, myself, though I had no acquaintance with him at the time. Do you want to talk to Graves about it?"

"Well, no—not until I see the others. I want to get their version of the affair before saying anything to him about it."

"I will introduce you to several, and you can get all the information you want from them."

They then went to three different men who had seen the row in which Dodd was killed, and Hensler introduced Hackett as a friend of Ross, who was trying to find testimony that would clear him of the charge of murder.

"Well, Ross didn't throw that glass—that I know," said the young man, "because I was watching him at the time, and was looking straight at him when the glass was thrown. He was too full to throw anything with much force."

"You would swear to that in a court, would you?" Rob asked, as he jotted it down in a notebook.

"Of course I would. I would not like to go into court as a witness, if I could help myself."

"No, I understand that; but you don't want Ross to be known as a murderer, when he is innocent?"

"No, nor any other man."

Two others said the same thing.

Robert grew light-hearted and merry, and was almost tempted to throw off his disguise and proclaim his presence. But he decided to wait and make his vindication complete.

"This begins to look as though Ross could come back to the city again soon," he said to Hensler.

"Yes; when we see a few more we can go to the papers, and publish what we have learned, and proclaim his innocence."

In the meantime one of the young men met Gerald Graves, and took a drink with him.

"Say, has Hensler and a fellow by the name of Hackett been to you in reference to the killing of Dodd?"

Graves looked astonished.

"No," he said. "What is it they want?"

"Hackett is hunting up every fellow who was present, and getting his version of the affair. He says Ross didn't throw that glass, and that you are the only man who says he did."

Graves turned pale and glared at his companion.

"Is the fellow trying to make me out a liar?" he asked.

"I guess it will amount to that when he gets through."

"What's he got to do with it, anyhow?"

"He says Ross is a friend of his, and that he is going to try to clear up the mystery as to who threw the glass, so that Ross can come back to New York."

"Great Jehoshaphat!" exclaimed Graves, "I only hope he may succeed; but if Ross didn't throw that glass, I can't see things before my eyes, that's all."

"But how is it that nobody else but you saw him throw it?"

"Just answer me one thing," said Graves. "Why did Ross run away if he did not throw it?"

"That's what puzzles me. I can't understand it."

"Neither can anyone else. Ross will never come back to explain, either."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PLOT THICKENS.

Graves was greatly disturbed by the news that red-haired Hackett was hunting up the boys who were present at Palace Hall when Dodd was killed.

"What in everlasting sin does it mean?" he asked himself a dozen times. "Has Ross sent him here to hunt up the witnesses and sound them? Hanged if he hasn't gone about it the wrong way. I'll have him put out of the way so quick that he won't know who did it. I am not going to have my game spoiled at this stage of it. It can't be possible that Jessie has employed him to trace it up? Great Jupiter! If I only knew that she did I'd get a dozen men to swear that he was the wickedest man in New York."

Graves was not the man to stop half way in any game he was playing. He was a man with no moral scruples whatever, and would not hesitate to buy crime at any price, if he had need for it.

He left his quarters and went in search of a well-known desperado, who had been employed by him on previous occasions.

The desperado's name was "Tough Tim," one of the roughs of the Sixth Ward of New York city.

Graves knew his haunts, and did not hesitate to go in search of him in several places of low repute.

He found him at last, and motioned to him to follow him.

Tim followed him out across the street to another rum-hole, which they entered.

"I've got a job for you, Tim," Graves said, as soon as they were seated in a dark corner of the rum-hole.

"What is it, an' how much?" Tim asked, in a very business-like air.

"I want a chap knocked out of time—not killed, but sent to the hospital for three months. One hundred dollars for the job."

"Whar's yer man?"

"His name is Hackett, a red-haired man, who is strong on his pins and a good boxer. You will find him about the big billiard hall uptown—Palace Hall—looking for men who were present on the night Dodd was killed with a beer glass."

Tim wrote down the name, held out his hand for the price of the job—always half cash in advance for such work.

Graves paid him fifty dollars, and then left, giving the bar-keeper a dollar for drinks for the few bummers in the room.

"I guess that will settle Mr. Hackett, and put a stop to his meddling, for awhile, at least," said Graves, as he made his way back uptown toward one of the fashionable club-houses, of which he was a member. "If he is laid up in a hospital for two or three months I will have time to secure the prize. By the way, I must run out to Rosedale in a few days, and try to see Jessie. I don't think she would refuse to see me. If I can have a talk with her for a few minutes, I can make myself solid with her."

"Tough Tim" put on his brass knuckles, and prepared to go in search of his victim as soon as night came on. He dressed himself in a decent-looking suit of clothes, and went up to Palace Hall, where he took his seat among the spectators and waited for his game. His face was one that was noticeable in such a place as that, because it was a hard one—a villainous-looking one.

But no one seemed to notice him, at least nobody spoke to him. He kept his seat, and puffed vigorously away at a cigar.

At last Hackett and Hensler entered and greeted several friends and acquaintances in the hall. Both appeared to be in the best of good humor.

It soon became nosed through the hall that Hackett was the hero of the runaway horse on Broadway, and "Tough Tim" overheard a couple of men discussing him as a pugilist.

"He's the best man I ever saw," remarked one of the two.

"Yes, he's a hard hitter and a quick one," said the other.

"I'd like to see him in a match with a good man."

"So would I. It would take a mighty good man to get away with him."

All this was very discouraging to "Tough Tim"; but as he proposed to take a cowardly advantage and strike from behind he did not give up his job. He eyed Robert closely from head to foot, and saw that he was well able to take good care of himself.

Hensler found two other men there who were present when Dodd was killed, and those he introduced to Hackett. They promptly gave their version of the glass-throwing, which entirely exonerated Robert from blame.

Gerald Graves did not show up that night. He did not wish to have Hackett ask him any questions about the affair, hence he kept away from Palace Hall, content to leave the issue with "Tough Tim."

After remaining there for nearly an hour, Hackett and Hensler concluded to go up to another place in the hope of finding two other fellows they wanted to see.

Tim arose and followed them.

Of course, his movements were not noticed.

Robert and Hensler entered the other hall and looked around for a few minutes.

"Tough Tim" kept them in sight, and watched their movements as a hawk is said to watch the movements of the barn-yard fowls.

He resolved to wait just out on the sidewalk to make the attack. He would knock him down with one blow, stamp on him with his iron-nailed shoes, break a rib or two, and then dart away before anyone could interfere to arrest him.

When Hackett and Hensler came out of the place they found him standing right in front of the door.

He deliberately drew back, and aimed a powerful blow at Hackett. Hackett saw the movement, threw up his guard, and waited for it to come.

But Tim had been so unfortunate as to step on a banana peel, and in an instant, instead of flooring his intended victim, was himself stretched at full length upon the sidewalk.

It was a hard fall.

"Let me help you up," said Hackett, promptly assisting him to his feet.

The moment he was on his feet Rob gave him a blow on the ear that laid him out at full length again.

"Come, let me help you up," said Hackett, as coolly as an iceberg.

"Blast yer, get away from me!" hissed the bully.

Whack! went another blow, and down he went again.

An oath that was really sulphurous in its intensity escaped him as he rose to his knees with an ugly knife in his hand.

Robert promptly drew his revolver, cocked it, and leveled it at his head.

"Drop it, or down you go!" hissed Robert.

Down went the knife on the pavement.

"Hold up your hands!"

Up went his hands.

"Here comes a cop!" cried someone in the door of the saloon.

Robert looked around, and "Tough Tim" darted away like a streak of greased lightning.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BITER BITTEN—JESSIE WHITE DISAPPEARS.

"Come away!" said Hensler, "we don't want the police after us."

"No, come on," and the two hastened down the street.

No arrests were made.

"Tough Tim" got away with a headache and a pair of black eyes that would last him ten days, while Hackett had not received a scratch.

Of course Rob knew nothing of the cause of the attack upon him, and went on with his investigations all the same.

Thinking he had arranged to have Hackett fixed, Gerald Graves concluded to return to Rosedale and try to have an interview with Jessie White.

Accordingly he took an early morning train and left for the country.

Two hours riding brought him to Rosedale, and he went at once to the residence of his uncle.

It was soon known all over the village that he had returned, and many called on him to inquire about the Ross-Dodd case.

"Ross has not been heard from," he said, "and I hope he will succeed in getting away entirely, as he is a good fellow, and I would not like to see him tried for a crime he did not really intend to commit."

"Just what I say," said an old citizen, shifting a huge

quid of tobacco from one side of his mouth to the other. "I hope they won't never catch him."

That was the universal sentiment in Rosedale.

Mr. Ross sent for him, and he lost no time in responding to the invitation.

The Ross family received him with a cordiality that would have melted the heart of a Comanche; but Gerald Graves had no heart at all, and hence it had no effect on him.

"Oh, Mr. Graves!" cried Nellie, meeting him at the door, "have you heard from him?"

"Not a word. He is on the wing yet, you know, and has not had time to write."

"But we do want to hear from him so much," she said.

"In this case no news is good news, you see," and he took a seat alongside of Mrs. Ross, and told her that Robert was safe.

"But we want to hear from him," said the anxious mother.

"Of course you do, but you must take care that your anxiety does not cause his arrest. The detectives will watch your mail and get spies to visit you and ask all sorts of questions."

"Oh, we won't talk about it to a living soul."

"That's right. Keep perfectly silent, and you'll hear in time. Maybe when the witnesses are all dead he can come back and be as he was before."

Mrs. Ross looked sad, and tears came into her eyes. She did nothing but moan all day and all night. It was a terrible strain on her mental and physical strength, and it was wearing her away.

"But, Mr. Graves," said Nellie, after a pause of several minutes, "I think I ought to tell you of something you don't know, perhaps, as I don't know what to think about it. Brother was engaged to Jessie White, and——"

"Why, that's no news," he said, interrupting her. "Everybody in Rosedale knew that."

"So they did, but they don't know how hard it went with her when she heard the news. It came near killing her. She loved him better than her own life. I've been going to see her every day since it happened, and trying to console her the best way I could. When she read brother's letter the other day, a sudden change seemed to come over her, and she grew reticent, wouldn't talk much about it—seemed to be brooding over something. I don't know what to make of it, and now, when I went to see her this morning she was gone!"

"Gone!" exclaimed Graves. "Gone where?"

"No one knows. She did not occupy her room last night, and this morning her mother discovered that she was gone. Her mother is trying to bear up and keep it secret—— But what's the matter, Mr. Graves? Are you ill? You are so pale!" and Nellie Ross sprang to her feet with a look of alarm on her face.

"No, no!" he gasped. "It's only a momentary pain. 'Twill soon be over."

He was deathly pale, and rose to his feet and staggered out of the room like a drunken man.

brother, and that Jessie again protested her undying love for the unfortunate young man.

Nellie, as the reader already knows, returned home and reported to her parents that Jessie would not write anything to be sent to Robert. Mrs. Ross was greatly grieved, as she understood that to mean that Jessie was going back on him.

She never dreamed that Gerald Graves was the cause of Jessie's refusal to write.

Jessie was not willing to intrust any of her writing to the custody of Graves.

"I can see through it all now," she said, the day after Nellie showed her the letter. "Graves is at the bottom of this thing somehow. He did not befriend poor Robert because he loved him as a friend, but to get him out of the way. He swore he would make me his wife at all hazards, and knowing that Robert and I were engaged, did all he could to get him out of the way. Oh, why did I not tell Robert about it? I never thought they would ever be friends; and now Robert is all undone. But I am sure I am right, and I am going to New York and see if I can't find out all about it. I've got two hundred dollars in the bank, and can do as I please with it. I'll dress up as a boy, and go round to those places, and see what I can find out about it."

Jessie was a girl of great will power, and where her heart, as in this case, was set on anything, nothing could stop her.

Accordingly, she took two or three days to make her preparations. When everything was ready, she went down to the Rosedale Bank and drew out all her little savings—in all about \$200—and then returned home.

At midnight she arose, dressed herself, threw a thick veil over her face, and left the house. Nothing seemed to dampen her ardor or frighten her.

She caught the midnight train, and in a few minutes was hurrying away toward the great city on her mission of love.

The people of the metropolis were just sitting down to breakfast when the train rolled into the great depot.

Hackmen were clamorous for the privilege of carrying her to some hotel. They besieged her on all sides.

But she had been to the city before, and knew just what she wanted to do. With her satchel in her hand she entered a street-car, and rode downtown. Seeing a restaurant-sign after going down several blocks, she stopped the car, got out, went in, and ate a hearty breakfast.

Then, feeling stronger and braver, she sought a modest-looking hotel, where she secured a room, left her satchel, and again went out on the street, this time in search of a clothing store.

Entering one, she said she wanted to purchase a suit of clothes for a brother who was just her own height, and but a little stouter.

The obliging clerk showed her a number of suits of the size wanted, and she made a selection, paid for it, and ordered it sent to her hotel to her address. Then she went to another store, bought such underwear as she would need, and had them sent up as the other was.

"Now I must go to a barber-shop," she said, "and have my hair cut short."

Barber-shops being everywhere, she soon found one, entered, and asked:

"Can I have my hair cut off here?"

The proprietor bowed, smiled, and answered:

"Yes, miss, but it won't improve your looks much."

"Oh, never mind about that. I've taken a notion to have it cut off for the summer."

"Well, take a seat, miss, and I will soon have it off," the barber said.

She took a seat in the barber's chair, and the man of razors and shears commenced operations.

CHAPTER XVI.

JESSIE WHITE GOES TO THE CITY.

The reader will doubtless remember that when Jessie White read Robert Ross' letter to his father, which Nellie Ross had brought over to the cottage for her to read, she changed color, and suddenly grew reticent, refusing to write any letter to be forwarded to her lover.

It will also be recollected that Nellie Ross was so puzzled at the change that she asked her if she was angry with her

"Do you wish to save the hair, miss?" he asked, after working several minutes.

"Oh, yes," she replied. "It's very valuable. Put it in paper for me and I will take it home."

The job finished, she stood before the glass and looked at the change that had been wrought in her appearance by the loss of her splendid tresses.

"You were right," she said to the barber. "It does not improve my appearance. It will grow out again, however, and I like a change sometimes."

"If you ever want to change sweethearts, miss, please be kind enough to let me know, and——"

"Thank you. I don't wish to change. How much do I owe you?"

"Twenty-five cents, miss."

She paid him, took up the paper containing her shorn tresses, and departed.

"Bless his cheek!" she said to herself, as she wended her way up the street. "A perfect stranger, too! It may be the city style, but I don't like such impudence. A barber! I wouldn't give my Robert for a thousand barbers!"

From the barber's she went to a hat store, where she purchased a nobby hat, which served still more to alter her appearance when she put it on.

Having completed the outfit by the purchase of a cane, and watch and chain, she returned to her quarters at the hotel, having spent just fifty dollars of her two hundred.

"Now I will put them on," she said, "and get used to them as soon as I can. I suppose I will have to be on my guard all the time to keep from betraying myself. Oh, I wouldn't be discovered for anything in the world."

Dressing herself in the clothes she had bought, she stood before the glass so changed that she was astonished.

"Why, my mother wouldn't know me," she exclaimed. "I am sure Robert himself wouldn't know me in this garb unless my voice betrayed me. I didn't know it would make such a complete transformation."

She spent the whole day in pacing back and forth in her room to accustom herself to the clothes, and acquire confidence in herself.

"Now," she said, quite late in the afternoon, "I must change to another hotel, for I came here a young lady. I must go where I will be known as a young man or a boy, for I do look like a boy that ought to have his mother with him. I'll pack my dress and other things in the satchel and then leave this house. My bill is paid, so I need not stop to say anything to anybody."

Just as she planned so did she do. She took up the satchel and marched boldly downstairs and passed out into the street. "I don't want to go to an expensive hotel. I want to go where I will not be noticed."

Down the street she started, when a pug-nosed little boot-black ran up and said:

"Lemme carry your bag?"

"Yes—here, take it, and tell me where I can find a nice cheap hotel."

"Is it a hashery yer wants?"

"A what?"

"A hashery, or grub-house," said the boy.

She smiled in spite of herself, and replied:

"I want to find a nice hotel, where I can have a good room all to myself."

"Oh, dat's what yer want; come erlong an' I'll show yer der most bang-up place in der town fer der money," and the little fellow led the way down several blocks, and turned into another street. She followed, watching the brave little fellow as he trudged along, as if his dogged self-reliance challenged her admiration.

"Do you live here?" she asked, coming up to his side.

"Of course I does, an'— Hyer, let go, yer snoozer!"

A young rough had suddenly snatched the satchel from the boy, and started off with it.

CHAPTER XVII.

JESSIE'S ADVENTURES IN THE CITY.

Fearful that she would lose her satchel, Jessie started forward in pursuit.

"Drop that satchel, sir, or I'll shoot!" she cried, changing her voice as much as she could.

"Don't shoot!" gasped the man, suddenly dropping the satchel and taking to his heels.

He thought a mere boy would not be carrying a pistol.

Pug-nose picked up the satchel again.

"Dat snoozer couldn' stan' yer bluff," he said, leading the way again.

"He is a bad man," said Jessie.

"Of course he is. He's er Sing Sing bird, he is."

"A convict, you mean?"

"Dat's der size of it, mister."

"He looked like a bad one."

"I say, cully," cried another small boy across the street, "whatchum got in der grip?"

"Gold!" sung out the little hero, at which the others laughed.

"I say, Billee!" called another.

"Cheese it, cully!" returned pug-nose.

One of the others ran up and stuck his dirty little fist under his nose.

"Smell of it!" he said.

"It stinks!" retorted pug-nose.

"Does it?"

"Yes—rotten."

"How does it feel?" and he rubbed it hard against pug's nose.

Now, pug had a large mouth—a very large opening for so small a face. He opened it and closed on the dirty fist.

A wild yell escaped the young rascal, which was heard above the din of the street two blocks away.

Pug held on for a moment or two before he let go. Then he drew back, opened his mouth, dropped the satchel, and went for his antagonist like a hornet.

Two other boys sprang forward to take up the satchel, but Jessie was too quick for them, and secured it.

For a minute or two the boys fought like wildcats, and then someone cried out:

"Cops!" and they all vanished away like snow on a hot oven, except little pug-nose.

He seized the satchel and said:

"Come on, mister. Dem snoozers don't know nuffin."

"Are you hurt?"

"Naw. I'm tough, I am."

A policeman came lazily along, swinging his club, taking no notice of anything but the pretty girls as they passed.

"Hyer's ther hashery," said pug, stopping in front of a small, neat-looking hotel.

"Well, go in."

He entered, walked up to the desk like a little man, and set the satchel on a chair.

The clerk arose, turned the register toward our heroine, and handed her a pen.

She took it and wrote her name in a large, bold hand:

"Jesse Black, New York."

"Do you want a room, Mr. Black?" the clerk asked.

"Yes, sir, and a good one, too, if you have one unengaged."

"I think we have some good ones left," he remarked, writing No. 17 opposite her name.

"Here, my little man," she said, turning to the valiant little boot-black, "here's a dollar for you. Come round here in the morning and I'll have you black my boots."

The little fellow snatched the coin, and his eyes glared at the pretty youth as if astonished at his liberality.

He had not expected more than a quarter of the dollar at least.

"Bully for you, boss!" he said. "I'll come, sure pop!" and ran out of the house at full speed.

"Please show me up to my room," she said, turning to the clerk.

A servant showed her the way up two flights of stairs to a very neat room.

There she sat down and gave way to a train of hard thinking.

"I must be on my guard all the time," she said, "or I may betray my sex. That would ruin everything, and set all the gossips in Rosedale to talking about me. I must find out where that Palace Hall is. That's the place where that glass was shattered. I suppose I can find it by asking people I meet on the street. When I get there I suppose if I walk in and look on just like other folks I will not be noticed particularly."

After supper she went out on the street, took notes of the house and number, and then wandered along till she met a policeman.

"Officer," she said, "can you tell me just where I can reach the Palace Hall—a large billiard hall?"

"Oh, yes, of course," replied the officer; "but a boy of your age had better be looking for someone to take him home."

"I—I—am looking for a friend there," replied Jessie. "I never go to such places, only I must find a friend who goes there."

"Who is your friend?" and, as he asked the question the knight of the locust looked hard at her.

She recovered her self-possession, thinking it dangerous not to be manly under such circumstances.

"Oh, never mind," she replied. "I don't think it necessary to call in the aid of the police," and with that she passed on.

"That's a smart chap," the officer remarked, going on down the street.

"I won't ask any more policemen," she said. "That one nearly took my breath away. City people are born impudent, I believe."

In the next block she met a youth of her own age, whose face made a favorable impression upon her, and put the same question to him that she had to the officer.

"Yes; I'm going right by the place," was the reply.

"Thanks. I am anxious to see the place."

They went up nearly a dozen blocks, and turned toward Broadway.

"Here you are," said the youth. "This is Palace Hall."

"Won't you go in with me?" Jessie asked. "I never was in there."

"Well, yes. I am not in a very great hurry. Come ahead."

They both entered the great hall, where upwards of a hundred people were smoking, drinking, and playing billiards.

Jessie was bewildered for a moment or two. She could scarcely realize her whereabouts.

"Here, let us sit down and look on," said the youth, going toward a couple of vacant seats.

Jessie followed, and seated herself by his side.

"Do you drink?" the youth asked.

"No."

"Smoke?"

"No."

"Chew?"

"No."

"What do you do, then?"

"Oh, I try to do right about everything," was the ambiguous reply.

"Well, I guess you wasn't born in New York," said the youth, smiling good-naturedly.

"No. I was born in a small country town."

"I thought so. You'll have a lemonade, won't you?"

"Yes. I don't object to that."

"Well, come on then—let's go to the bar."

They went to the bar and drank a glass of lemonade each. Jessie was in a state of suppressed excitement all the time, but managed to keep a wonderful control of herself.

The situation was not what she naturally expected, and so she concluded to say little at first, and see all that was to be seen.

They returned to the billiard hall and again seated themselves to watch the games going on at the tables.

Suddenly she turned as white as a sheet, and pressed her hand against her heart, as if to still its throbbing, for Gerald Graves came in and took a seat by her side!

CHAPTER XVIII.

ROBERT ROSS MEETS HIS ACCUSER.

Graves wore a troubled look.

He had just returned from Rosedale about two hours.

When he arose and staggered out of the house, after Nellie Ross had informed him of Jessie White's disappearance from her home, he reeled along the street more like a drunken man than a sober one.

His face was ashen-hued, and there was a look of desperation in his eyes.

"Oh, fool that I am!" he hissed. "I gave him money to get him away to the other side of the world. That is where I was a fool. He has sent her money to come to him, and she has gone. Gone, when I thought the prize was almost in my grasp! May the lightning strike him dead, and may misery forever be her portion! If I ever find him out I'll denounce him as a murderer, and have him sent back to New York in irons!"

Thus, torn by an all-consuming rage, Gerald Graves went back to his uncle's residence, and threw himself on his bed. He tried to compose his nerves by drinking copious draughts of brandy.

He took the afternoon train and returned to the city.

So disturbed was he that he could not remain still a moment, and to keep from thinking too much of his defeat he resolved to go over to Palace Hall and mingle with friends whom he was sure of meeting there.

On entering the hall he looked around in search of some of his boon companions, and not seeing them, he sat down in the chair next to the one occupied by Jessie herself.

Had he dreamed that he was so near the woman he was ready to commit almost any crime to win, he would have been in a far different mood.

Luckily for Jessie no one noticed her extreme agitation, and in a few minutes it had passed away.

Graves kept his seat by her side some ten minutes or more, when an acquaintance came along.

"Hello, Graves!" exclaimed the newcomer, "what in the world are you looking so woe-begone about?"

"Oh, I'm all broke up," was the reply.

"The deuce you are? What's broke you up?"

"You recollect that fellow Ross who killed Dodd here a fortnight ago?"

"Yes; what of him?"

"Well, he had a sweetheart out in Rosedale, where he came from, the prettiest girl I ever saw. I was mashed on her myself. I was out there this morning, and learned that she had given her mother the slip, and left for parts unknown. Of course he has communicated with her in some way, and she has gone to him. It makes me mad to see such a handsome girl throw herself away on a man like him."

"Well, yes, it is bad," remarked the other. "But then there are just as pretty ones left, I guess."

"I don't know that there is; I never saw one like her in all my life. I'd like to hear of that fellow being caught and hanged."

The other laughed and said:

"Oh, you're all broke up now. Come and have a drink with me," and they both turned and walked toward the bar.

Of course Jessie heard every word that was said. Her eyes fairly gleamed with the outraged spirit that blazed up in her.

"Come," she said to the youth by her side, "it's time for us to have another lemonade," and she led the way into the bar-room, where she took a stand right alongside of Gerald Graves and his companion.

"Give me some brandy," said Graves to the bartender.

"Two lemonades," said Jessie's young companion.

"So you think she has gone to join him, do you?" the friend of Graves asked.

"I haven't a doubt of it. Where else could she go?"

"Oh, I don't know anything about it myself," replied the other. "It would be woman-like for her to do so, I suppose."

Graves drank his brandy at a gulp, and turned away from the bar. Jessie and her young companion kept close to him, so as to hear all that was said.

"It's only a question of time about his being caught, I suppose," remarked the friend.

"Yes; only a question of time; I'd like to see him hung."

"Why, I heard that he was a particular friend of yours," said the friend.

"So he was, but when a man commits a murder, and runs away, enticing a beautiful and innocent young girl to leave her mother and go with him, he can no longer be a friend of mine."

"I think you are right about that," said the friend. "But a friend of Ross, by the name of Hackett, says Ross didn't throw the glass that killed Dodd, and is trying to hunt up evidence to sustain his side."

"So I heard. He's a red-headed humbug running on his muscle. Somebody will smash him some day, and put an end to him. I saw Ross throw the glass, and will swear to it. Ah! There's Hackett now, with some friend of his."

"Yes—that's Charlie Hensler."

Jessie looked around and saw the red hair that Graves had spoken so sneeringly of.

He was the friend of Robert Ross, and that was enough to warm her heart to him.

Hackett came up and spoke pleasantly to Graves.

"Hello, Hackett!" exclaimed Graves, as our hero came up. "They tell me you are hunting up evidence to prove that Ross didn't kill Dodd?"

"Well, yes, I am. A friend of mine has asked me to do so, believing that he is innocent of the charge."

"Have you found any evidence yet?"

"I haven't found any evidence that he did throw that glass. I've seen many who were present, and they all say they don't know who threw it."

"Well, I saw him throw it," said Graves with pugnacious deliberation.

"So I have heard. Do you know anyone else who saw it? Ross is a fine fellow, you know, and we——"

"Fine fellow, indeed!" sneered Graves. "Do you know what he has done since he fled the city?"

"What has he done?"

"He was engaged to a young lady in Rosedale, where he comes from, and he has persuaded her to leave her mother and go with him—a fugitive from justice."

Hackett was dumfounded.

He turned pale. Then he recovered himself. His eyes blazed with indignation.

"Do you know that to be true, Graves?" he asked.

"I do. I was in Rosedale this morning."

"Well, I know that it is not true—so far as he is concerned, for I know him too well not to——"

"Do you mean to tell me that I am a liar, sir?" demanded Graves in a threatening tone.

"I mean to say that you lie when you make such a charge against Bob Ross," replied Hackett.

Graves sprang forward and aimed a blow at Hackett's face. The latter parried it, and gave him one under the left eye that laid him out at full length on the floor.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER MURDER.

Gerald Graves fell as though shot through the heart when Hackett struck out straight from the shoulder. His friend promptly picked him up, and Hackett walked away to the other end of the hall.

The knockdown created a sensation, of course. Men rushed from the billiard-tables and crowded around Graves, anxious to know what it was about and what damage was done.

Jessie had followed Hackett to the other end of the room.

She wanted to know the man who was a friend to Robert Ross, and find out, if possible, what he had ascertained about the throwing of that glass.

"Are you not afraid they will arrest you?" she ventured to ask, going up to his side. "Why don't you go away from here?"

Hackett looked down at the pale face of the youth, and said:

"I acted only in self-defense, and am not afraid of any arrest. It was over too quick for any arrest to follow."

"Are you a friend of Robert Ross?" she ventured to ask.

"Yes; first, last, and always. Did you know him?"

"Yes, and I am his friend, too," she replied.

Hackett looked hard at her for a minute, and remarked:

"I don't recollect you, and I thought I knew all his friends."

"Neither do I recollect ever having seen you before to-night. Yet I have known him all my life."

Hackett was puzzled.

"Where do you live?" he asked, again staring hard at her.

"I live in New York, at the —— hotel."

"The thunder you do! I live there myself!"

Jessie stared in turn, and said:

"I have just moved in."

"Let me get at him, the red-headed bully!" angrily cried a voice behind them, and looking around they saw Gerald Graves rushing toward them with a cocked revolver in his right hand.

Robert turned and faced him.

Graves raised his revolver and fired just as Hackett sprang aside.

A shriek followed, and a man some distance off, sitting in a chair, sank down on the floor, shot through the heart.

Quick as a flash of lightning Hackett sprang forward and

knocked Graves down again, and then seized the revolver, which had fallen to the floor.

The greatest excitement prevailed in the great billiard hall. Men rushed to and fro in a frenzy of excitement, not knowing what damage had been done.

"Are you hurt, sir?" Jessie asked of Hackett.

"No, not touched. This is no place for one so young. You had better go back to your hotel."

"Haden't you better go, too?"

"I will go soon, and——"

"Why, this man is stone dead!" exclaimed a man who had attempted to raise the stranger to his feet.

"What! dead!" cried Hackett, darting forward to look at the victim.

"Yes—shot in the left breast," said someone, pointing to the bullet hole in his coat and vest.

Hackett turned away, and walked deliberately over to where two or three friends were trying to quiet Graves.

"Gerald Graves," he said, "your shot killed a man on the seats back there. I arrest you for murder."

"Hands off! Don't touch me!" cried Graves, making an effort to get out of the room.

His three friends also tried to assist him in getting out on the street.

"No, you don't go!" cried Hackett, placing himself before them. "I arrest you for murder, sir."

"Get out of the way!" angrily demanded one of the men, trying to shove him aside.

Hackett hurled the man aside, saying:

"You may pass if you like, but Graves, never!"

One drew his revolver, and aiming it at him, hissed:

"Get out of the way or you are a dead man!"

Folding his arms across his breast, and looking the man in the face, Hackett said:

"I will not move—commit a murder if you will."

The man lowered the revolver, and looked first at Graves and then at our hero.

"Kill the wretch! Give me the pistol!" and Graves made a grab at the weapon, which exploded, sending the ball into the floor between Hackett's feet.

Quick as lightning Hackett sprang forward, and dealt him another blow that felled him to the floor like a log.

The other two men sprang aside, not daring to face a man who could strike such powerful blows with his naked fists.

Crack! went a revolver in the crowd, and a bullet cut off a lock of hair from Hackett's head.

"What coward did that?" he exclaimed, drawing his own revolver.

"What's the trouble here?" demanded a policeman, as two of them rushed into the hall.

"That man there has committed murder," said Hackett, pointing to Graves, who was just getting on his feet again. Arrest him. I saw him shoot."

The officer promptly arrested Graves.

"Where's the dead?" the other officer asked.

"On the floor at the other end of the hall," said Hackett, pointing across the billiard-tables.

The officer went over there and found the dead man.

He sent for an ambulance and had the body carried to the hospital. There it was ascertained who he was and where he lived. The body was then sent to his home.

Graves was carried to the station-house and locked up.

"My young friend," said Hackett, turning to Jessie, who remained near him through all the trouble, "you had better get away from here or you may be arrested and locked up as a witness. They do that sometimes in New York, you know."

"But won't they lock you up, too?"

"Maybe they will, but I can stand it, I guess. You are too young."

"Better come back to the hotel and not be arrested," suggested Jessie, who wanted to ask him some questions.

"I'll go along soon," he replied.

"I'm going home now," said the youth who had shown Jessie into the place.

"I am very much obliged to you," Jessie said, taking his hand and shaking it cordially. "I hope we may meet again soon. Come to the hotel and see me."

Promising to call again the youth left, and a few minutes later Hackett and Jessie departed together.

Before they reached the hotel police officers had returned to the billiard hall to arrest witnesses. But they were gone except two, who were carried to the station and locked up till morning.

On the way back to the hotel Jessie asked:

"Do you know where Mr. Ross is?"

"Do I? Well, I only wish I knew. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I am very much interested in him, I suppose. Do you think you can find enough evidence to clear him of the dreadful charge of murder?"

"I do. Graves is the only man I can find who says he saw Ross throw that fatal glass, and now he has committed a murder himself."

"But will that relieve Mr. Ross?" Jessie asked.

"I don't know but it will. I think Graves had something against Ross, and wanted to get him out of the way; but what it is I can't imagine. I know that he gave Ross money on which to make his escape, and now he seems to be very bitter against him. It is all a mystery to me."

"Well, he now knows what it is to have such a charge against him," said Jessie, "and may feel disposed to do justice to Mr. Ross."

"I hope so. He tried to kill me to-night, and seems to have very bitter feelings against me since hearing that I was befriending Ross. I hope I may be at last able to get at the bottom of this thing now that he is in trouble himself. There's the hotel; I will see you in the morning and talk with you about it. Good-night."

"Good-night," said Jessie, and they entered and went at once to their respective rooms.

CHAPTER XX.

OUR HERO SPECULATES—THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER.

The next morning Jessie was up early, and went below to wait for Hackett, being most anxious to meet and talk with him again.

"Oh, if I dared, I would tell him about myself—my engagement to Robert and rejection of Graves. He would understand it all then."

Thus ran her thoughts, and the more she thought about it the more she was inclined to do so.

"Of course I can do it," she said, after another long pause. "without letting him know that I am Jessie White in disguise. It wouldn't do to reveal my identity to him. That would be very imprudent. Oh, if they find out that I was a witness of that horrible murder last night, everything would come out in the papers, and I would be ruined! Ah, here he comes now! How like dear Robert he walks. I never saw two men more alike in their movements. He reminds me so much of Robert, except his hair and beard. Good-morning, Mr. Hackett."

"Hello, Black!" exclaimed Hackett. "You are an early riser."

"Yes. I always rise early," replied Jessie.

"It's a good rule. Have you had breakfast yet?"

"No. I was waiting for you."

"Good—glad you did. Come on and we'll have a good hot breakfast together."

Jessie followed him out of the hotel to a restaurant across the street, where they ordered such as they wanted.

"I am going down into Wall street," said Hackett, "as soon as the brokers begin to reach their offices, and buy stocks."

"Do you know anything about stocks?" Jessie asked, not knowing what else to say under the circumstances.

"No; not a blessed thing. But a young broker gave me a point yesterday that has been running in my mind ever since. I've got a few hundred dollars by me which I am going to use. He said a certain railroad was going to fall into certain hands, and that the stock would go bounding upstairs like a cat chased by a dog—those are his words, and advised me to put all my money on it."

"Do you know him to be all right?"

"I don't know much about him, only that he is a wealthy young broker. I did him a good service, and in gratitude he gave me the point. I can't think he would tempt me to my ruin that way and under the circumstances."

"No. I don't think he would. If you have no objections I would like to put in one hundred dollars with you."

"Of course. I am going to put in four hundred, about all I have. That will make five hundred. That will buy fifty shares on a margin of ten per cent."

"I don't know anything about such things. It's all I have. If I lose I'll be ruined."

"So will I. But I'll take the chances."

So after breakfast they started down to Wall street, where they waited till the young broker came to his office. He greeted Hackett cordially, and Jessie also, when she was introduced as Jesse Black.

"You are just in time," said he, "for the trade is to be closed to-day, and then the stock will go up like a rocket. To show you my confidence in my prediction, I'll buy the stock for you on a margin of one per cent, which will get you five hundred shares."

"Thanks," said Hackett, handing him the money. "I shall leave everything to you."

"All right."

A receipt was signed and given, after which the two departed.

"Have you seen the morning papers yet?" Hackett asked.

"No."

"We'll get one and see what it has to say about that shooting last night. Graves is a rich man's son, you know, and that will make it all the more interesting."

They bought a paper, and were astonished at the prominence given to the affair of the night before. The account of the shooting was not correct in many particulars. Hackett's name was mentioned, of course, as he was the one Graves tried to kill.

"I shall have to go to headquarters and give myself up as a witness," said Hackett, "or they'll arrest me if I don't."

"Will they lock you up?"

"Not if I give bail. I guess our broker will give bail for us. I'll go back and see."

They went back to the broker's office, where Hackett explained the thing to him, and he said:

"Yes, if they require bail, of course you send for me."

"Thanks," they both said, and then they left again to go uptown.

"I guess we had better go up to police headquarters and give ourselves up as witnesses."

"No—not me. Please don't let 'em know I was there," pleaded Jessie, turning pale.

"Well, I'll go myself. You can wait for me at the hotel," and he turned away, leaving Jessie to make her way back to

the hotel, where she had registered under the name of Jesse Black.

Hackett went to police headquarters and gave his name, saying:

"I suppose I am wanted as a witness in the case. I am ready to give bail, if any is required. Mr. ——" (giving the name of the broker) "will sign my bail-bond."

"You will be wanted at the inquest to-day," said the officer in charge.

"I will be there. Where is Graves?"

"Locked up in cell No. —. Do you want to see him?"

"No."

When Hackett came out of the station a man stepped up to him and asked:

"Is your name Hackett?"

"Yes, sir."

"A friend of Graves wants to see you at the —hotel. Will you walk over there with me?"

"No, sir. I don't care to be put out of the way mysteriously to save Graves' neck from the gallows," was his reply.

The man was staggered, and for a moment he was at a loss to know what to say.

"I pledge you my word of honor," he said, finally, "that nothing of the sort is intended."

"But what's your pledge worth? You are a stranger to me. I don't know that you have any honor."

The stranger flushed and retorted:

"My reputation is above reproach, sir, and——"

"I don't say that it isn't," returned Hackett, "but that I don't know anything about you, and I have good reasons for distrusting any friend of Gerald Graves."

The man was silenced. He could make no reply for some time.

"Why don't he come to me instead of my going to him in some private room somewhere?"

"Well, he'll come to your room if you will receive him there," said the stranger, his face brightening up as if a sudden obstacle had been removed.

"Will he allow a friend of mine in the room?" Hackett asked.

"No—decidedly not," was the prompt reply.

"Why not?"

"Because the nature of the business must remain a secret forever between you two."

"Oh, then he can see me on the street—on Broadway, for instance, where treacherous stabs will be detected and the murderer punished."

"Yes—he will meet you at any corner on Broadway you may designate."

"Tell him to meet me at the corner of Broadway and Houston, then, at one o'clock, to-day."

"Why not wait there for him now? I can have him there in ten minutes."

"All right; go and fetch him."

The man went away, and Hackett started for the place of rendezvous.

CHAPTER XXI.

TRAPPED.

Hackett waited some ten minutes on the corner of Broadway and Houston street, and then saw the stranger approaching, accompanied by another man whom he remembered having seen at the Palace Hall on several occasions. But he could not remember his name—in fact, he didn't know that he had ever heard his name.

"This is the gentleman," said the stranger, as they approached Hackett.

"Well, sir, as the friend of Gerald Graves, what do you want of me?" Hackett asked, in a tone that plainly indicated that he regarded the friends of Graves as the enemy of himself.

"I want to talk with you about your testimony in the case against Graves," said the man.

"Well, what about it?"

"Are you going to appear in the case?"

"Since I am the man he intended to kill, I guess my presence on the witness-stand will be considered quite necessary."

"What will you swear to?"

"I beg your pardon. I can't answer that question farther than to say I will tell the truth. Now, what is your object in asking these questions?"

"Simply to find out how you stand. I want to engage you to go to Europe on some very important business for a solid house in this city."

"Oh, you do, eh? Big pay, I suppose?"

"Yes; big pay, and but little to do, and a three years' contract made with you."

"And before that time Graves will have been saved by my absence from the witness-stand, would he not?"

"That has nothing to do with it. This is purely a matter of business."

"So it is. I shall be very happy to accept the position after the trial."

"But we want you to start at once."

"Oh, you do, eh? Well, in that case I can't accept."

"Not at any price?"

"Not for a million of dollars, my dear sir. I can't be bought off that way."

"Then you can be killed off!" hissed the man, through his clenched teeth.

"Yes, that would be easier to do, and more in keeping with the character of Graves and his friends. I look for more funerals than this one, and I don't expect to head the procession, either."

The man looked as though he had bitten off more than he could swallow.

"You had better reconsider your decision, sir. It will make your fortune if——"

"It will make my fortune to hang Gerald Graves," interrupted Hackett. "So you need not say anything more on the subject. I bid you good-day, sir."

Hackett tipped his hat and turned away, leaving the man standing there completely mystified by his words.

"Oh, he's getting uneasy!" muttered Hackett, "and wants to get me out of the way. Well, there are others who saw him do the shooting. He intends to close up the others, too, I guess. But he can't buy me off, and I won't be killed off, if I can help it."

He went back to his hotel, and hunted up young Black, whom he found in the reading-room.

After telling everything that happened, he said:

"So you see they will form a plot to get me out of the way by fair means or foul. As you are a witness, also, they may find you out, and try to get you out of the way also."

"Do you think they will try to do me any harm?" Jessie asked, turning pale.

"I don't know. I think they would first try to buy you off—to get you to leave the country. If not succeeding at that, they would try to put you out of the way by foul means."

"Oh, mercy! What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to change my disguise to that of an old man, and move to another hotel. By that means they may not be able to get on my track so easily."

"Couldn't I change, too?" Jessie asked.

"You might, though I don't know that it's necessary, as you may not be known in the case."

"Well, I'll wait and see if they know of my having seen the shooting. Oh, I wouldn't be mixed up in the case for anything in the world."

"I'll tell you what you can do, though," said Hackett; "you can go to that number on the Bowery and get me a wig and beard suitable for an old man of sixty. I would go myself, but I may be watched. They may have a shadow on my path. Will you do that for me?" and he handed her a small bit of paper on which he had written the number of the costumer to whom he wanted to send.

"Yes," said Jessie. "I will go with the greatest pleasure."

"Here's money to pay for them. I'll wait for you here. Try to be particular, and not let anyone know where you are going or what you have got."

Jessie took the money and directions, and left the hotel. Reaching the Bowery she was surprised to hear herself accosted by a man who had followed her unperceived from the hotel.

The man had seen her leave Hackett's side, and had followed her as a youth who was with Hackett on the night of the murder.

"I say, young man," said the stranger, laying a hand on her shoulder, "were you not at Palace Hall last night, when a man was killed?"

"Yes—I was there," she replied.

"I thought so. I was there too. So we will both be witnesses in the trial."

"I don't want to be a witness, sir," said she.

"Neither do I; but we will have to be unless we leave the city. Are you going to be at the inquest this afternoon?"

"Not unless I am forced to go," was the reply.

"That's me. Now, look here; I'm going to make a good thing out of this. Graves' people have got oceans of money, and they are willing to spend it to save him. They want to get all the witnesses out of the way, and if you want to go to Europe on a one or two years' trip, why, they will give you all the money you want for expenses. With the witnesses all out of the way the law can't convict him, of course. Do you catch on?"

"Yes," said Jessie, thinking it best to pretend to fall into his view of things. "I would like just such a trip as that."

"So would I. I am going to keep out of the way, so I won't have to give bonds to be on hand as a witness. Where are you stopping?"

"At the —— hotel."

"That's where Hackett is stopping, too, eh?"

"Yes; he's stopping there."

"So I heard. What's he going to do?"

"I don't know. He seems to be troubled very much about it or something."

"Couldn't you persuade him to go to Europe with you?"

"I don't know—I might. How much would they give us to go away together?"

"Oh, they'd give a big sum—five thousand dollars, maybe."

"Well, meet me here to-morrow at this time, and I'll let you know what we will do."

"Good for you. I'll be here. But don't go about the inquest, recollect."

"Oh, no, of course not," and they parted.

Jessie went on up the Bowery, and the man hastened back to keep a watch on Hackett's movements at the hotel. She purchased the beard and big wig, and had them wrapped up securely, and then returned.

Hackett was waiting in the reading-room for her.

"Say, I've got some news for you!" Jessie said. "Go into the ladies' parlor, and I'll tell you."

Hackett soon learned of the meeting on the street of Black and the shadow, and of the answers Black had given.

"You did just right," said Hackett. "But you want to keep in the house now, or they may kidnap you. They are a dangerous crowd."

"I'll have to meet him to-day."

"Well, there won't be any danger in broad daylight right on the street."

"No, I don't think there is."

That afternoon Hackett attended the inquest, gave his testimony, and then gave bonds for his appearance when wanted.

Graves was committed for murder, and Hackett went back to the hotel, where Black was waiting for him.

That evening, when Hackett was not around, a man came up to Jessie and handed her a note.

"Dear Black," it ran. "Come with the bearer of this, and you will learn something greatly to your advantage.

"Yours, etc.,

"Hackett."

"Yes," she said, folding the note. "Where is he?"

"Come with me and I'll lead you to him," said the man.

"All right, go on."

She followed him up two blocks, crossed the Bowery, and went up another street which was very forbidding in appearance.

"This is a hard place," said Jessie to the man.

"Yes, but if one goes along without interfering with anybody, he won't have any trouble."

"How much further?"

"Right here—upstairs—come on," and the man led the way up a rickety flight of stairs. Jessie followed, and they both entered a dingy-looking room. The man wheeled and slammed the door to, locked it, and said:

"Ha, ha! you are my prisoner, young one!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DECOY GAME.

The mocking, triumphant laugh of the man caused Jessie to stagger backward against the door, as if stricken a terrible blow. She pressed a hand over her heart, and gasped:

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you are my prisoner, youngster," said the man, chuckling gleefully.

"Didn't Mr. Hackett send for me?"

"No—but we are going to send for him. You'll see him soon enough. Come along with me," and taking her by the arm with a grip and force she knew would be utterly useless to resist, he went into another room of the old house, which, from appearances, was a regular thieves' den.

Jessie followed, and soon came to where two men and a hard-featured woman were sitting, apparently waiting for him.

"Yer got 'im, eh, Bill?" one of the men asked, as they entered the room.

"Yes. He bit like a hungry trout, an' I landed him in a jiffy."

"Waal, he is a nice-lookin' boy," said the woman, looking hard at the pale-faced youth. "He don't look as ef he'd had er hard time of it. What's yer name, boy?"

"Jesse Black," replied Jessie. "But what does this mean? Was that note a forgery to decoy me away from the hotel?"

"That's just the size of it, youngster," was the reply of the man they called Bill

"What was it done for?"

"Business—business, youngster. Just sit down to that table there and write a note to Hackett to come here—that you want him, and that your life isn't worth two cents unless he does."

"I won't do anything of the kind," Jessie replied.

"Oh, you won't, eh? Waal, we'll see if we can't make you do it," said the man. "Give me that raw-hide, Sal, and help me draw his coat."

The woman got up and procured a rawhide whip and gave it to Bill.

"Take his coat off and let him have it on the bare back."

Jessie turned as white as a sheet. She knew that if she resisted her sex would be discovered, and thus make matters worse.

"Oh, I'll write it," she said. "I see I can't help myself. But he'll kill you for this. He is a terrible man when he is angry."

"We'll take care of him," said Bill. "Sit down and write the note."

Jessie sat down at the table and wrote at dictation:

"Mr. Hackett.—I am in trouble and want you to come to me at once. You are the only one who can do me any good. Come with the bearer.

Yours,

"Jesse Black."

"That'll do," said Bill, taking up the note and looking it over. "If I hadn't seen you write it I would swear a girl wrote it."

Jessie said nothing, but leaned back in the chair and stared up at the two villains.

They both read it over, and then the same man who had carried the note that had succeeded in decoying Jessie into the clutches of the rascals, said:

"That'll do. Give it to me. I'll work it on him, and will have him here in ten minutes after I see him. Do you know where he is now, Black?"

"No," she replied. "But I was looking for him every minute when you gave me that false note."

"Well, I'll go there and wait for him," and the man took his hat and left the room.

Let us now return to the hotel and note the occurrences there since the young detective, for so we may regard Jessie, left.

A few minutes after Jessie went away with the bearer of the decoy letter, Hackett returned to the hotel and asked the young night clerk:

"Do you know if Black has retired to his room?"

"I know that he has not," was the reply, "for the key of his room is here in the box."

"I saw him go off up the street just now," said a guest of the hotel who was standing near by. "A man brought him a note that seemed to disturb him a little, and then he went off with him."

"How long since?" Hackett asked.

"Some fifteen or twenty minutes since," was the reply.

"That's strange. I don't think he has any acquaintances in the city. What sort of a man was it who brought him the note?"

"Well dressed, and looked somewhat like a sport."

Hackett sat down in the reading-room and thought over the matter.

"I'm afraid he has been trapped," he said to himself. "They have spotted him and will try to get him out of my way for fear I will work him as a witness. I'm very uneasy about him."

Some ten or fifteen minutes later a man entered the hotel, looked around, as if in search of someone, and then walked

leisurely into the reading-room. Hackett was resting his elbows on the reading-table and holding his chin in both hands.

"Is your name Hackett?" the man asked, going up to him.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Here's a note for you, sir," and the man gave him the note Jessie had written. He glanced at the handwriting and sprang to his feet.

"Who gave you this?" he exclaimed.

"The writer," was the reply. "Read it and decide what you will do."

He opened the note and read it. Of course he recognized the handwriting of his beloved Jessie.

The whole thing flashed through his brain in an instant.

"Jesse Black was Jessie White, and now the wretches have got her in their clutches. She has not been able to recognize me any more than I have her. My God, if she should be harmed. I now know why she left Rosedale. She is in disguise, trying to aid me in my trouble."

"What will you do, sir?" the man asked. "Will you go or send an answer?"

"Go with you, of course," he said. "Lead on, I'll see what Black wants. He's a young friend of mine, and I hope he has not got into any trouble."

"I don't know much about it," said the man. "You will soon find out, though, for he is only a few blocks from here."

Hackett made up his mind to be ready for any treachery that they might try to perform, and so placed his hand on his revolver to have it ready for instant use.

The man thought him unsuspecting, and led the way up to and across the Bowery. Hackett followed, keeping his eyes open and taking in everything that occurred around him. He was resolved to meet treachery with revolver in hand, for he knew that his beloved was in the hands of the villains.

"It's her handwriting," he said to himself, "for I would know it among ten thousand letters."

"This way," said the man, leading the way up the dirty, forbidding street.

"All right—lead on. I'll follow you if you lead to the dark regions."

Two more blocks were passed, and then the man halted in front of the old building, saying:

"They are upstairs here."

"Very well. What are you waiting for? Lead on. I want to see him as soon as possible."

The man started up the stairs and Hackett followed.

When he reached the top of the stairs the man rapped a certain way on the door, and then waited two or three minutes before any response was made. Then the door was opened, and two stalwart men stood there.

"Come in," said the decoy, stepping inside.

Hackett stepped inside.

The door was slammed to and locked.

"You are a prisoner," said the decoy, with a dry chuckle.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LOVERS DISCOVER EACH OTHER.

Hackett looked from one to the other of the three men. They all wore triumphant smiles on their faces.

"Why am I a prisoner?" he asked, as cool and unmoved as if he was in the midst of a party of friends.

"Because we have use for you," was the reply.

"Where is young Black?"

"In the next room."

"Is he a prisoner, too?"

"I should smile."

"What are you going to do?"

"We are going to see that you don't give any testimony in the Graves' trial."

"Oh, I see. What are you going to do to prevent my doing that?"

"Cut your throat, if it can't be done any other way."

"Suppose you go to work at it now?" and he drew his revolver.

The decoy sprang forward to clutch his arm, but Hackett was too quick for him. He fired, the ball going clear through his body.

"I'm shot!" groaned the decoy, as he reeled back against the wall.

Crack! crack! went the revolver again, and each of the other two received a bullet each, and staggered away. One of them fired a shot, but he was hit a second before, which saved Hackett from a similar fate.

Two of them sank down to the floor—one dead and the other groaning in deathlike agonies.

"Am I a prisoner now?" Hackett asked.

"Oh, I am killed!" groaned the decoy.

"What's the row?" demanded the woman, who had been left in the next room with Jessie, bursting into the apartment.

"We are—all—killed!" groaned one of the men.

"Oh, Mr. Hackett!" cried Jessie, darting forward and clinging to him. "I'm so glad you came!"

It was as much as Hackett could do to restrain himself. He wanted to hug her to his heart and tell her who he was, but concluded to wait for a more opportune time.

The woman attempted to escape from the room.

"Stop!" commanded Hackett. "Move a step at your peril!"

Two policemen ran up the steps and burst into the room.

"Hello!" cried one of them, looking around at the men lying on the floor. "Who did this?"

"I did—ask that man about it," and Hackett pointed to the dying decoy.

The officer asked the decoy about it.

"Yes!" he said. "He did it. I am dying. I'm wiped out. We were hired by Gerald Graves' friends to get Hackett and Black out of the way as witnesses. Hackett opened fire and spoiled the game. I'm Dick Harold. I'm the man who threw the glass that killed Jim Dodd at Palace Hall. Ross didn't do it. I threw it, and Graves knows it. Write to Ross and save him. He is innocent!"

"Thank God!" fervently exclaimed Jessie, clasping her hands over her heart and leaning back against the wall.

"You hear what he says, do you, officer?" Hackett asked.

"Yes. You are not to blame, so far as I can see. But I will have to take you to the station-house."

"All right."

One of the officers then went with Hackett and Jessie to the station-house, where they were given quarters in the captain's room, or private office, until the matter could be investigated.

"Oh, do you think they will send us to jail?" Jessie asked, as soon as they were alone together.

"No. What have we done that is wrong? Self-defense is allowed to every human being. They had you a prisoner, and had used you to entrap me also. I recognized your handwriting the moment I saw it, and——"

"Why, how did you know my handwriting? I never wrote to you before."

He took up a pen and wrote on a piece of paper which he found on the captain's desk:

"I love you more than I do my own soul, for your efforts to prove my innocence of James Dodd's death. Robert Ross."

This he handed to her.

She glanced over it, and then, with a glad cry, fell fainting in his arms.

Luckily the cry was not heard by anyone in the front office, or the situation would have been far more interesting. As it was, Hackett—as we shall continue to call our hero—was very uneasy for fear her sex should be discovered.

He covered her face with kisses, and then seized a glass of water and dashed it in her face. She opened her eyes with a start and a groan.

"Oh, Robert, have I found you again?" she murmured.

"Yes."

"And you did not kill that man?"

"No, Jessie, as God is my judge. I own I went to places where I should not have gone, but I did not throw any glass, as you heard that man Harold say. Why Graves should say that I threw it I cannot conceive."

"I know why he did it," she said.

"You do?"

"Yes. He asked me to marry him, and when I refused he swore that no other man should call me his."

"Why, darling, I never knew that!"

"No, and it was wrong of me not to have told you about it. I never thought it worth while to mention it. As soon as I read your letter to your father, in which you denied throwing the glass, and stating that Mr. Graves had been your friend, I suspected something wrong, and prepared at once to disguise myself and come to the city, for the purpose of trying to find out about it. Oh, Robert, I'm so glad your good name will be cleared at last!"

"So am I, darling, and then I will go back to Rosedale and keep away from the temptations of the city."

"Oh, if you will I shall be so happy, and I know your mother will too."

"Yes. I know it will be better for both of us. But, Jessie, darling, would you marry me now, after all that has happened?"

"Yes, Robert, even though all the world were to shun you, for I love you above all the men in the world."

He snatched her in his arms and pressed her to his heart.

"The world will not shun me, darling," he said. "My name will be cleared, but the events of the last three months will always be a sad memory to me. I have probably killed three men to-night, and——"

"That will make no difference with me, dear Robert. You will be justified as I justify you now," and she kissed him tenderly as she spoke.

"Now, darling," he said, "all my fears are gone. Sit in that chair there while I sit here. We must keep your identity a secret, and when you get out of this place go back to the hotel and wait till I come."

"Why not you go back with me?" she asked. "They won't keep you here, will they?"

"I hope not. We'll see, though, in the morning. Can you sleep in that chair—no, there's a lounge over there under the window. Lie down there, and I will keep watch over my darling."

She did as he suggested, and laid herself down on the lounge, while he sat in a chair and watched the face of her whom he loved better than life itself.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

The night passed, and morning found the two lovers still in the hands of the law. They knew not what had transpired since they were taken to the station. They knew not that

the man Harold had, just before breathing his last, made statements before several witnesses, exonerating Hackett from all blame.

At six o'clock the police captain came in, and said:

"Well, sir, how goes it?"

"Pretty rough," said Hackett, "as a chair is not exactly the best bed for comfort."

"You can have a bed to-night, I guess, as there's no reason in the world why you should be detained. Harold died last night, exonerating you from all blame in the matter. It will make a hero of you, my dear fellow, and I congratulate you," and the captain shook hands with him cordially.

"I am glad to hear you say that," said Hackett, "for I tried to keep inside the law."

"Which you did to the very letter. He also said that it was he, and not Ross, who threw the glass that killed Dodd at Palace Hall, which statement will clear Ross. So you see you did a good thing when you opened fire on that gang."

"Yes, more good than you know," said Hackett.

"The judge, under the circumstances, may order a nominal bail, and then you will be released."

"Thanks. Will we be allowed to go out for breakfast?"

"Yes, with an escort."

"Very well. Wash your face and hands, Black, and we'll go out to a restaurant."

Jessie sprang up, went to the wash basin, and bathed her face and hands.

"I am ready now," she said.

The captain sent an officer with them, and he led them to a restaurant, where Hackett ordered breakfast for three.

The officer ate with them, and then escorted them back to the station.

Three hours later, on the judge being sent for, they were released on nominal bail.

"Now come back to the hotel, darling," whispered Robert, "and we'll talk over the situation, and see what's to be done."

They went back to the hotel, where many people were waiting to get a glance of the man who had killed three ruffians the night before.

He didn't wait any time with them, but went up to his room, accompanied by Black.

"Here's a note for you, sir," said the clerk a moment later, knocking at the door.

He opened the door, took the letter, and tore off the envelope.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "We struck it just right. Those stocks went up forty dollars a share, when Mr. Hubbel, our broker, sold out for us, clearing twenty thousand dollars. Oh, Jessie! we will get married this very day!" and he snatched her in his arms and hugged and kissed her till she had to beg him to desist.

"We are rich now," he continued, "and I'm going to see a lawyer and get his advice as to what course to pursue. You stay here till I come back."

He seized his hat and dashed out of the room.

A few minutes later he was in consultation with a well-known lawyer, to whom he told his story, concealing nothing.

"You are in no danger," said the lawyer. "For a fee of \$100 I will agree to see you through any court in America."

"I'll give it," and forthwith he wrote an order on his broker for the amount.

"Now go and marry your girl at once—this very day," said the lawyer, "and then both of you will be all right."

Robert went back to the hotel, and told Jessie what the lawyer had said.

"Now, are you willing to marry me to-day, Jessie?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Go to your room and put on your dress then."

"But that will betray me to others in the house."

"So it will. We'll go to another hotel. I'll go down and pay our bills."

Jessie went to her room, and prepared to leave the hotel. Robert went down and paid their bill, called a carriage, and both entered and drove away.

In the carriage Jessie put on the dress over her boy's clothes, and thus was ready to go to the hotel in her proper dress.

A dollar extra to the driver made him as dumb as an oyster, and when they entered the hotel they were assigned a large room together as man and wife.

"Now I will go out and wait till you change your dress complete, and then we'll take another carriage, go to a minister, and get married."

Jessie lost no time in dressing, and in an hour they were in another carriage—she as Jessie White, and he as Robert Ross—going to the residence of a minister.

An hour later they were pronounced man and wife, and returned to the hotel, Jessie having the certificate of her marriage in the pocket of her dress. She was as happy as a bird, for now she would soon return to Rosedale a bride, and rich enough to have the finest home in the town.

The inquest was held in the afternoon, which Robert attended as Hackett, and the verdict acquitted him of all blame.

Then he went back to the hotel and threw off the disguise he had been wearing. He was now to be Robert Ross again, under which name he had registered at the hotel.

"Now for the judge and the district attorney's office," he said, kissing his bride and leaving her again.

The district attorney was surprised when he learned who he was.

"You have done right in reporting yourself," he said to Robert. "No man but Graves ever swore that you threw the glass at Dodd. You may go, and feel assured that you will not be troubled."

"Can I see Graves?"

"Yes—if you wish to," and the lawyer gave him a written permit, with which he went away.

On reaching the Tombs he presented the order, and asked permission to see Gerald Graves.

He was shown into the cell where the murderer was confined. At first Graves did not recognize.

"Hello, Graves!" Robert exclaimed. "You're in a hole here."

"Robert Ross!" exclaimed Graves, staggering back as if stricken a blow. "You here!"

"Yes. I'm back again and married."

"Married!"

"Yes—Jessie White and I were quietly married at 9 a. m. to-day, at — church parsonage. Harold was killed last night, and before dying said he was the man who threw that glass, and that you had hired him to get rid of Black and Hackett as witnesses against him. Black was Jessie in disguise, and Hackett was Robert Ross. I came back from Philadelphia the next day after I left the city, and have been here ever since hunting up evidence on the Dodd case. It was a nice game you played on me, but now I am a witness against you in a genuine murder case. It was me you tried to kill, though you didn't know it. Good-by," and before Graves could regain his speech sufficient to make a reply Robert was gone.

From the Tombs Robert went to his broker, who insisted on his coming as Hackett, before he would give him the money he had made for him on stocks.

Robert returned to Jessie, told her of his interview with Graves, and said:

"To-morrow the papers will have the true story of both of us. Then we will draw our money and go back to Rosedale, after calling on my uncle's family."

"Oh, we will go home to-morrow!"

"Yes, and buy us the prettiest home in the village."

Reader, our story is ended.

The temptations of the city were too much for Robert Ross, and so he fell. But he rose again after a terrible ordeal, and had the good sense to return to the country, where he is now the head of an interesting family, and one of the most respected citizens of Rosedale. But he has never forgotten the experience of the country boy in New York.

Gerald Graves was tried, found guilty of murder, and sentenced to hard labor for life.

THE END.

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